

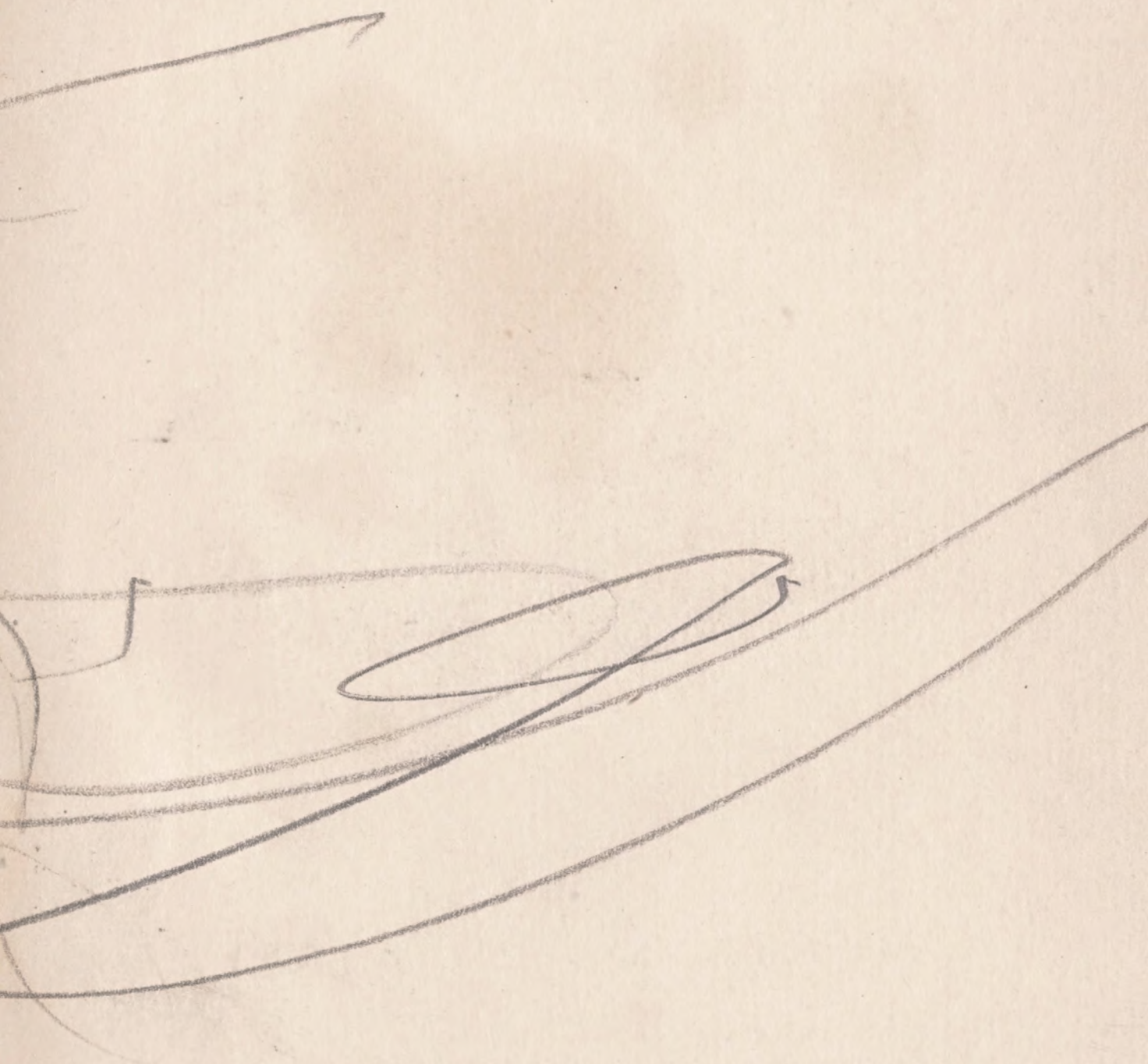




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GLIMPSES OF NATURE.



The Moonlight Walk through the Woods.

THINGS COMMON AND UNCOMMON.

BY

MARY DWINELL CHELLIS,

AUTHOR OF "TWO BOYS SAVED," "GOOD WORK,"
"AT LION'S MOUTH," ETC.



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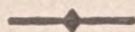
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THINGS COMMON AND UNCOMMON.

CHAPTER I.

A HOME VISIT.

THE winds of March blew fiercely, sounding its bugle call through all the land, by lake and river and mountain. Each leaf which had defied the blasts of winter to tear it from the parent stem now yielded to a resistless force, and danced in wildest measure at the bidding of its master.

“ This is the kind of weather that tells on

a fellow," exclaimed Mason Stuart, who was walking with his cousin, Dick Fielding. "Hasn't been any thing like it this winter, and I hope there wont be any more. Yesterday that beech tree Aunt Margaret thinks so much of had lots of leaves on it, and now they're all gone. Say, Dick, do you believe there's any sign in it?"

"In what?" was asked in reply.

"In the leaves staying on. I've heard folks say, that, when a good many leaves stay on the trees, it's a sign we shall have an open winter. Is it so?"

"I don't know. I think I've heard something of the kind, but that is all I know about it."

"Well, now, I wish folks were sure about things. It's a great bother to ask questions, and not find out what you want to know; and a fellow can't study out every thing himself."

“Why not?”

“Because there’s so much, he don’t have time. Seems to me everybody ought to know something certain. I thought you knew all about trees.”

“Then you were mistaken. I know more about them than some other people, but that is very little. I can tell you how you can find out about the truth of the sign, as you call it. For the next ten or twenty years, notice the difference in the falling of the leaves, and see if there is a corresponding difference in the winters. In that way you can form a pretty correct judgment about it.”

“I suppose I could do that; but it’s a good while to wait, and I’ve got a great many other things to look after. I’ll write it down, though, in my book.”

“What book?”

“Oh! a book I’ve got, where I keep a list

of things I want to know. I've been keeping it ever since Aunt Margaret went away. When I see her, I expect she'll help me. She knows most every thing. If the rest of us were as smart as she is, there'd be something done in the family."

"I think there would. I am as ready to praise Aunt Margaret as you can be."

"Shouldn't wonder, but I don't a bit believe you love her as well as I do. Tell you what, Dick, I wish there were some girls growing up just like her. You can laugh if you want to, but that's a sensible wish."

"So it is, Mason, a *very* sensible wish. I should like to see such girls, although just now I should rather see Aunt Margaret herself."

"Well, you can't. You'll see somebody else if you go into the house; and, as we are here, we might as well go in, though it's

awful lonesome. It don't seem a bit as it used to when Aunt Margaret was here ; but then it's her house, and that's some comfort."

Cousin Rachel greeted her guests cordially, and brought forward some choice apples which she rightly judged would be acceptable.

"There are apples like these at Austenville," remarked Mason.

"So your aunt said in her last letter. I suppose you are expecting to see Edward before long."

"He's coming some time this week. Mother thinks he'll be here to-morrow, but that will depend upon the luck he has in market."

"I don't think there's any danger but what he'll have good luck. I want him to come and make his visit, so your Aunt Margaret can come home and stay a while."

“She wont come till every thing’s all right up there,” said Mason confidently. “She runs that mill herself. I suppose Ed helps her, but she’s at the head of it.”

There was no disposition on the part of the elder brother to dispute such an assertion as this ; but, when they met on the following day, Mason mentally confessed that five months had wrought a wondrous change in “Ed.” The young business man who had won marked favor for himself, and for the goods he had exhibited, was quite unlike the student who had abandoned his books under the pressure of a strong necessity.

“Are you willing to remain in Austenville ? ” asked his mother after she had listened to a detailed account of what had been done there.

“I am willing to remain there for the present,” was replied. “There is a great deal I wish to see done there, and I should

be sorry not to have some part in its accomplishment. Aunt Margaret, too, has the same feeling."

"I am glad she has, and I am glad you are satisfied with your position ; although it seemed to me a terrible calamity which sent you there."

"I seldom think of it, mother ; and, when I do, I am half inclined to consider it a blessing in disguise. When you see Margie, you will see at once that she has no need of sympathy. There's not a bit of a careworn look in her face."

"You have written to her since you have been away ?"

"Certainly I have. I wrote her as soon as I had made arrangements for the sale of our goods. She understands the business as well as I do, and she has a greater interest in it."

"Well, we're going up there this summer,

aint we?" now exclaimed Mason, who had listened silently to a long conversation of which these few sentences formed a part.

"You are all expected, and Aunt Fielding's family with you."

"That means the children, don't it? If Uncle Fielding goes, he'll be finding fault all the time about something. He's worse than ever lately. I pity Dick, but I suppose they get used to their father's fretting."

"Mason, that's not a proper way for you to speak," said Mrs. Stuart in a tone of reproof.

"Well, it's the truth, mother; but, if you say so, I ought not to tell of it. Some time, Ed, I want you to tell me all about your society, and those two boys Aunt Margie thinks so much of. I must go to work now. Mother and I thought 'twas best to buy a cow, and of course I have to take care of her. Clarke likes the milk and cream, but

you wouldn't catch him soiling his hands in the barn. For my part, I never was afraid of clean dirt. Mother and I own the cow, and let the family have the use of it. I promised to take all the care of it without complaining, and we've had it a week now."

"How about your lame ankle? I wonder you assumed any new duties."

"Oh! that's pretty near well, except when I forget, and start off full speed. We had a chance to buy the cow, and it's always best to improve a good opportunity."

"Mason is the same independent boy he always was," remarked Edward, looking from his window as his brother crossed the yard with a slightly perceptible limp.

"Just the same," replied the mother. "But he is so good and truthful, I sometimes think I ought never to find fault with him. He is as loyal to his friends as any armored knight. I bought the cow to

please him. It is Mrs. Brown's Clover Top ; and, whenever she can refund the money advanced on it, the cow will be hers again. This last winter Mason has manifested a decided friendship for Rufus, which I have not discouraged. Rufus cut his foot soon after Christmas, so that he couldn't work for several weeks ; and that obliged his mother to run in debt. Week before last, she was so pressed for payment, and so troubled, that she decided to sell Clover Top ; and of course Rufus told Mason all about it. That is the explanation of our ownership of a cow. We shall probably keep her but a few weeks. Rufus is at work again, and has already paid something towards redeeming the family pet. There was no hay in Mrs. Brown's barn, or we should not have taken her away. I think Mason has a plan for helping Rufus earn money, but he has not told me so."

Here Clarke, who had been from home at

the time of his brother's arrival, came in ; and amid their hearty greetings supper was announced by Lilla.

“ We got the supper,” she added, regarding Edward a little shyly. “ Aunt Comfort's gone visiting, and we do the work.”

“ How much do we do ? ” was asked.

“ Ever so much. Ask mother if we don't. We wash and wipe all the dishes, and set the table, and do ever so many other things, besides doing errands for Madge.”

“ And how long is this order of things to continue ? ”

“ Till Aunt Comfort comes back ; and, if she didn't ever come, perhaps we should do it always, so mother could save her money.”

“ I don't think that will be necessary. We are not so poor as that. We can afford to keep Aunt Comfort, and save your strength for something better than wash-

ing dishes and ever so many other things. Aunt Comfort is one of our family."

"So she is," chimed in Mason. "We can't spare her long; but it wont hurt the girls to work some, any more than it hurts me. 'Twouldn't hurt Clarke to work either. Can't you find something for him to do? I guess he's thinking about it himself; but he spends a good deal too much time fixing his necktie, and blacking his boots."

"No one will make such a complaint of you," responded the brother thus criticised.

"No, sir: I don't intend to give any occasion for it. I've got more important business on hand; and 'twould be a good thing if you had."

"Perhaps so," was the good-natured reply. "We shall know better about that in ten years from now."

"We shall know something about it before that time, if we both live."

As housekeeper, Madge had been so absorbed in making preparations for the entertainment of her brother, that her face did not lose its anxious expression until she was heartily complimented upon the success of her efforts.

“Madge don’t like to be dictated. She wants to be mistress herself; and mother told her she might, as long as she kept things straight. I tell you, she’s a pretty nice housekeeper, though we all help her,” explained Mason.

“I think she is, if this supper is a specimen of her skill,” replied Edward. “Aunt Margaret will be astonished to hear of such ability in her namesake.”

“Oh! you see we’re all learning to do something. Aunt Margaret and you aint the only smart ones in the family, if you have started a mill. You don’t deserve much credit for that either. You wouldn’t

thought of doing such a thing if Aunt Margaret hadn't told you."

"That is true, Mason. She deserves all the credit. I have only been helping her."

"Well, now, that's a sensible way to talk. I knew it all the time; but I didn't know as you'd own it. You're improved since you went to Austenville, and you've grown better looking too."

This climax of criticism provoked shouts of laughter from all except the critic, who didn't "see any thing to laugh at."

The girls were still busy in the kitchen, when their cousins came to see "the manufacturer, and hear the news." It was well for Edward Stuart, that, when interested in a subject, he did not soon tire of it; for it was quite certain that he must talk of Austenville, unless he positively refused to do so. No one could be more desirous to learn of every thing pertaining to the old mill

and its surroundings than was Dick Fielding.

“I almost envy you the privilege of being there, Cousin Edward; but I am very glad the property was not allowed to go out of the family. That would have been a sad mistake. I wish I had been of age, and could have taken mother’s portion. Next to having it myself, I would rather Aunt Margaret should have it. I hope she will make a fortune, and you too.”

“Thank you for that. We hope to make the mill profitable.”

“I don’t doubt you will. That mill ought to have been run through the war; but there was nobody to do it. It’s a grand old place about there, isn’t it?”

“It seems so to me. Uncle William builded well, and Nature had done a great deal for the place before he began his improvements.”

“It seems strange that he should allow so much property to lay idle. I don’t think it was right.”

“In one sense, he had a right to do what he pleased with his own. But our people think it was wrong for him to abandon the mill as he did; although not one of them is disposed to blame him. He was very popular, and he is still remembered gratefully. This summer you are coming up to see for yourself, and then you can judge of our prospects.”

“I hope to go. I believe I am as impatient for the visit as Sadie is. I wonder sometimes where you will find room for us all.”

“Your wonder will cease when you have once tested the capacity of the great house. There is plenty of room for you all; and, if you don’t find every chamber luxuriously furnished, you can imagine that you are rus-

ticating in a new country. Aunt Margaret and Mrs. Bumstead will manage to make you comfortable. Mason can sleep in the barn if necessary."

"I suppose I could; but you needn't think Aunt Margaret will turn me into any worse place than she does the rest of you. She knows I like things nice, as well as anybody; only I aint going to be silly about it. I think, too, there's something for folks to do in this world besides prinking up," said the boy sturdily. "I say, Dick, shouldn't you like to camp out a week, just to see how 'twould seem? Ed, haint you got somebody up there that can go with us? Aint there somebody that knows enough about the woods to give us a fair start?"

"I presume there is. Harold Dorsey knows more about the woods than many people ever learn. I can't promise him for camping out; but, if you can make friends

with him, he will tell you a good many things it would be well for you to know. He is reticent and shy ; but perhaps you can gain his confidence."

"He's a boy, same as the rest of us, aint he?"

"He is a boy sixteen years old ; or perhaps we ought to call him a young man. But he is not like young men in general."

"Well, no matter if he aint. There's almost always something you don't like about boys in general. I aint a bit afraid but what I shall find him as near right as the rest. If Aunt Margaret says so, we shall camp out. You can go, and Clarke too, if you aint afraid of wearing old clothes. I've got some all ready that Aunt Comfort mended for me ; so mother wont have any trouble about that."

Thus the evening passed in conversation, sometimes serious, and sometimes mirthful,

Mason's voice, as usual, being often heard. Soon after the visitors had left, Mrs. Stuart and her daughters retired, while the brothers remained in the sitting-room. Of these, the youngest was first to decide that it was "bedtime," and with some parting word of counsel to Clarke said "Good-night."

"For once our irrepressible brother is right," was the comment he did not stay to hear. "He always speaks the truth, but it would sometimes be better if he would leave it unspoken. — This time I am obliged to him for introducing the subject uppermost in my mind. I don't think it is best for me to go on with my studies in school much longer. As Mason says, I don't care enough about study, to have it pay for anybody to make a great sacrifice to send me through college. If every thing had gone on as we expected, I shouldn't have thought much about it. But you see there was a change

and with it a new departure. I have as good a business education as I shall get from books ; and, in plain English, I think it is time for me to go to work. What do you think about it? What shall I do? As Mason would say, ‘ You’ve done pretty well yourself: now give a fellow some good advice.’ ”

“ What do you wish to do? What are you willing to do constantly and faithfully, giving to it your best energies ? ”

“ Those questions sound very much like some of Aunt Margaret’s. I’d rather she would ask them than you ; but I’m not going to find fault. If you could give up the prospect of being a great scholar when you really cared about it, you’ve a right to say what you’ve a mind to to me, especially since I asked you. But, to answer your questions, I don’t know what I *do* want to do. One thing, though : when I’ve made up

my mind, and taken the work in hand, I'll do it well. Isn't there a place for me at Austenville?"

"None you could fill with advantage to yourself or others. Neither do I think you would be contented to stay there, except for a few weeks."

"Why not? You have always represented it as a delightful place."

"So it is, but you would soon tire of it. I am sure I should, unless I had an absorbing interest in the mill, and a positive responsibility which I could not delegate to another."

"I might sell the goods."

"You might; but a well-established house can sell them better than you could. If you wished to enter such a house as clerk, it might not be a bad idea; but you will do well to give the subject careful consideration. There is no necessity for making a

hasty decision. Finish your course in the seminary, and then see what is best. When you have spent two months in Austenville, you can judge whether you would wish to cast in your lot with the company there. You are disappointed," remarked the elder brother after a short silence.

"Perhaps I am. We all look to Austenville as a sort of Eldorado. I'm not such a downright reliable fellow as you are, any way. It's a good thing for me that I have not a gold spoon in my mouth."

"No better for you than for me. We both of us needed something to rouse our ambition in a new direction. I shall never go back to my books, and now this gives me no unhappiness."

"It is too bad that you were obliged to leave them when you were such a tiptop scholar; but of course you'll do a good deal more hard studying."

“ I hope to. I have learned how to study, and, that once learned, there is no limit to one’s progress. I hope to have more leisure some time, but even in that I may be disappointed. As for yourself, do the best you can for the next three months; and, when you have graduated with honor, then think of business. Mason says you have improved, as well as I; and he is authority in such matters.”

“ So he is. But what will he be when he grows up ? ”

“ A man of whom we shall have no reason to be ashamed. It is safe to predict that, and also that he will occasionally remind us that we are not faultless. I used to consider him a disturbing influence in the family, but I am convinced that he is just the influence we need. If he takes us down from some high position not over gently, he softens the fall with a cushion of good nature, so that we cannot be angry.”



CHAPTER II.

A GLAD WELCOME.

MR. FIELDING did not call upon his nephew. The latter, however, saw him at his place of business, and constrained him to something like courtesy.

“You’ve sunk a good deal of money at Austenville,” he remarked at length.

“We are floating considerable money there,” was the reply.

“So much that, if you fail, your mother will be a poor woman.”

“So much that, if we succeed, she may be a wealthy woman. That is the view I choose to take. It is best to look on the bright side.”

“That is some of Margaret’s philosophy; but *men* who understand business know that the bright side will take care of itself. It is the *dark* side that needs attention. I never heard of any thing more absurd than this last project of Margaret’s.”

“It does not seem absurd to her, and every one must admit that she has a way of carrying out her projects very successfully. Come up to Austenville, and see for yourself what a beginning we have made.”

“I have no time to spend in travelling about the country,” was the ungracious response to this invitation; following which came the question, —

“When do you expect to enter college?”

“Never,” replied Edward Stuart. “I think I have found my vocation elsewhere.”

“Then you are mistaken. There was just one chance for you to do something in the world, and that was as a scholar.”

“I am sure I could have been a fine scholar, and ten years will decide whether that was my only chance. Good-morning.”

His “good-morning” was as bland when he left the counting-room, as when he entered it; and yet the young man did not care to prolong this interview. Mr. Fielding was in his most unreasonable mood; and the fact that only that morning he had been reminded of his mistake in selling his wife’s share of the old mill, served to increase the displeasure with which he regarded the present owners.

Mrs. Fielding greeted Edward cordially, notwithstanding her whole appearance expressed weariness and despondency. She was interested to hear of Margaret’s happiness, and glad to know that there was a prospect of good fortune in store for her sisters. She did not say that she wished she might share their fortune, but she *did*

say that she was inclined to wish with Sadie, that "a little bit of Austenville was her very own."

"I don't see how Margaret can do justice to two homes. She has always superintended every thing on the old place since father died."

"And she will continue to do so. She is coming here in a few weeks," responded her nephew, quite ignoring the characteristic sigh which had supplemented the words spoken so sadly.

"I am glad she has so much strength. For my part, it is impossible for me to understand such tireless energy. She does every thing easy too. When she is with you young people, she is as young as the youngest. I don't know as she will ever grow old."

"She never will in the way most people grow old. But you ought to see her in

Austenville to see her at her best. There's not one on the place but looks upon her with something like worship, and knows her for a friend. She has devised liberal things for our people, and they appreciate her. But you must come and see for yourself."

To this invitation Mrs. Fielding did not reply as her husband had done. "I shall come if I can; but I shall allow nothing to prevent the children going if Margaret wishes to see them," she said decidedly.

Edward Stuart's visit at home was necessarily short, and yet he parted from his family cheerfully. He was anxious to be at his work; and when Mr. Bumstead met him at the railway station with the hearty grip of a toil-hardened hand, and a welcome which owed nothing of its cordiality to conventional etiquette, he forgot that he had ever looked back longingly to other days.

"Sure, I'm as glad to see you, as I be to

see the sun after a three-days' storm in winter. And didn't I tell you the goods were all right?"

This question, emphasized with the crack of a whip, was a reply to itself. Nevertheless, when the rattling of wheels was lost in the oozy mud, the younger man answered, "You told me so, and I believed you. But I was glad to have your opinion indorsed at headquarters."

"You may well be that. There's where the money's coming from, and we want money. Every thing's right. Elliot's done your part well."

"I knew he would. And Aunt Margaret?"

"Just the same. She read your letter to me, and I told the hands. You ought to have seen them then, when they threw up their caps, and gave a grand hurrah. I told Elliot yesterday I wished there was another

mill. We've help enough offered to run it, and there's plenty of water. I think, Mr. Stuart, we'll be wanting the second mill before many years."

"Perhaps we may, but we must make the money to build it first."

"That'll not take long. We're just well started, and I count the hard part over. There's money in the mill."

"And in the land too. We must get that into better condition before we build another mill."

"Sure, and you may do that. I've nothing to say against the land. It's well enough. But water's of more account than land when you want to drive shuttles and spindles. It's likely, though, you'll be wanting a farmhouse."

"We shall, unless we can spare a cottage for Mr. Gray."

"You can't do that. We've nearly all

family men, and not enough houses for them now, let alone the boarding of the women help. You see they're not liking to be crowded. They're getting new notions, and it takes room to be tidy and fine. Mrs. Rady spreads her table with a bright cloth every evening, and sits down like a lady. Perhaps you didn't mind how things was working, Mr. Stuart."

"I didn't mind about such things."

"No more did I, till my wife told me. The society meetings and the talking of the mistress has done it. It's not like the old country, where you'd put the hands together like so many blocks."

"I hope not. I'm glad Mrs. Rady spreads her table very nicely every evening."

"Sure, and she'd have no choice since her grandchild is there. Norah Borine is as quick to see as a bird, and as quick to do

too. She's a handsome gypsy, as like her father in looks as like can be."

"Was he a Frenchman?"

"I'm thinking he was. He was good looking, and that was all the good there was about him. He was a bold fellow, they say; but Norah's as shy of strangers as a fawn. Jessie Elliot's trying to make friends with her; but when she's left alone, with her mother and grandmother in the mill, you'll hardly get the door opened. There! now you can catch a glimpse of the old mill. It's the best place in the world to me, and we'll make it the finest. Gatchell told me yesterday it seemed as though there'd been a miracle worked here since last summer; and I told him 'twas like breathing the breath of life into the dry bones of the valley. I aint a Bible man, but I've heard of something like that being done in Bible times. Had a strange meeting last Sunday night, Mr. Stuart."

“How was it strange?”

“Well, it *was* strange; that’s all I can tell. Everybody said a verse. Would you believe it, Mr. Stuart, I said one myself. Harold Dorsey cried, and everybody was all melted down some way. The mistress talked, and sure I think she’d better be the preacher. She’d find a man’s conscience if he had one. Elliot’s not the same at all these few days, but you’ll see it for yourself. I’m talking to you as though you’d been away for a year, and it’s only a day more than a week. You’ve been missed, Mr. Stuart.”

“I am glad of that. It is pleasant to be missed when one is away. I knew Aunt Margaret would miss me.”

“You may well say that. She’s counted the days, I’m thinking.”

It was a happy home-coming. Edward Stuart was greeted warmly by every person

whom he met. Hearty congratulations, too, were offered. The people of the town felt their interests identified in a certain degree with the prosperity of the mill, and had watched anxiously the progress of events. Now, however it might be with others more immediately concerned, their anxiety was at an end.

Miss Austen waited upon the piazza, ready to welcome her nephew in her own characteristic way. Mrs. Bumstead, whose good, motherly face was fairly radiant, next appeared; saying as she extended her hand, "I hope you're glad to be back, Mr. Stuart."

"I *am* glad, and glad to see you all again," was the quick reply.

Robert then came forward, his welcome beaming from his eyes, while his grandmother returned to the kitchen to complete her preparations for supper. This done, the

bell rang, and two sat down with grateful hearts to partake of a bountiful repast.

“It is a pleasure to sit at the table with you again,” remarked Edward Stuart.

“And a pleasure to have the table here?” responded his aunt.

“Yes, here, of all places in the world. If I could go back to my life as it was a year ago, I would not. I consider my mother better off to-day, than she would be with her lost ten thousand dollars well invested, and her share of this property running to waste.”

“I really think she is, Edward; and I count myself a fortunate woman to have so much invested here.”

“Uncle Fielding would tell us that we are building castles in the air. Time will prove whether our castles have firm foundations. It does not matter to me what Uncle Fielding thinks, but I am sorry for Dick. I

always wondered how he could have patience with such a father. I had a long talk with him while I was at home, and I think he feels it; although he did not say a word against his father."

"Of course not. Dick is too noble for that, unless the provocation should be very great. As he grows older, he will make a place for himself in the world. I hope he will adopt his grandfather's profession."

"He talked with me about it, and seemed inclined to think favorably of it. Mason had stated the case to him, and urged it as a matter of duty. But, if he should decide to study medicine, he ought to have every possible advantage."

"Certainly. He *must* have every advantage."

"But Uncle Fielding pleads poverty whenever money is wanted. At least, that is what Mason says, and our boy is generally correct in his statements."

“That is true. He is correct in statement, and usually in judgment. I should find it hard to have patience with untruthful boys. Fortunately, the boys in whom I am most interested are to be trusted. Harold and Robert are as true as you or Mason.”

“I believe they are. Harold has been strangely educated. I am more and more impressed with that fact. There is a mystery about his life. We have some marked characters among us. What of Elliot? Mr. Bumstead told me that he is not the same as usual.”

“I have seen but little of him while you were away, and then we talked of business. But I think his conscience is aroused. Judging from what I knew of him as your Uncle William’s friend, and what I have observed, he has been a man who regarded only the present life. When he decided to reform his habits, I presume he had no

thought of the sins he had committed against God ; and I am quite certain that but for Jessie, and respect for his employers, he would never have attended one of our sabbath-evening meetings. I know that he has been unwilling to have Jessie go to church. But yesterday she came in, and told me that her father said she should go as soon as he could have suitable clothing made for her. Harold is going too. He has a new suit of clothes, and looked really handsome last sabbath evening."

"Mr. Bumstead says you had a strange meeting."

"We had a *good* meeting, and it was strange only because so much feeling was manifested."

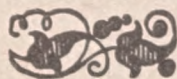
"You talked, Margie."

"Yes, I did. How could I sit there silent, when words sprang to my lips, and there were so many to listen, with so few to speak?

The time has come when no one can maintain neutral ground here. Did Mr. Bumstead tell you that he attended church last sabbath?"

"No, he did not," replied Edward Stuart, glad to be spared the necessity of responding to a remark which reminded him of his own duty. "I wouldn't have believed he could be persuaded to go; but perhaps he thought it necessary in order to take care of the horses."

"That was his excuse. But I believe he will go again; and, when the spring opens, I shall be disappointed if our people do not generally attend church."





CHAPTER III.

GLEANINGS.

MR. ELLIOT was standing in the door of his cottage, when, seeing Edward Stuart coming towards him, he went out, and walked to the gate where they met.

“Glad to see you,” was their mutual greeting; after which, questions and answers followed each other in quick succession.

“Where you have been, I suppose the season is further advanced than it is here,” at length said the elder man.

“So much that the difference is quite perceptible. There is less mud, and no snow

at all. Coming from the station, I saw some patches of snow in sheltered places."

"And you will see more before summer. If I am not mistaken, we shall have several snowstorms yet. Jessie hopes I shall prove to be a false prophet, but I think not. She is impatient for leafy trees and fragrant flowers. It's about the right time now to start sugar-making. There's a fine grove of sugar-maples on the hill, about half a mile from Mr. Peavy's."

"Does it belong to this estate?"

"Yes. That's what Mr. Peavy told Harold. He says the trees are large enough to tap. I suppose you don't know much about making sugar."

"It would be nearer the truth, to say that I know nothing about it. Neither does Aunt Margaret; and, for one, I had not thought of it."

"Well, perhaps you'll think of it now,

and, if you want to try it, Harold and I could be spared to do the work. There'll be some expense in buying buckets and pans, but it will only be for once."

"Will it pay, Mr. Elliot?"

"Most people think it pays. Many farmers never buy any sugar, except a few pounds of loaf, and some not even this. They depend upon what they make, and would be obliged to go without entirely if they did not make it. When the sap is running, there's not much work that can be done on a farm; and when the conveniences are once ready, there's not much further expense. In some places, it is quite a source of income. If it is made nice, and put up in an attractive way, maple sugar brings a good price."

"I know it does. At home, we have always considered it a luxury. Perhaps you had better calculate how much of an outlay

would be required to begin with ; and I will talk with Aunt Margaret about it. If she thinks favorably of the plan, we will set to work. Now I must go in and see Jessie. I have brought a book for her."

"She will be glad to see you with or without a book. *You* are always welcome, and a *book* is always welcome."

As the visitor entered, Jessie sprang from her seat, her face all aglow with the pleasure she had no thought of concealing.

"Did you miss me?" asked Edward Stuart.

"Yes, sir, every day," she replied frankly.
"You've been gone eight days."

"Yes ; and now I have come back to my work. What have you been doing?"

"Not much, only in the house."

"But here is some evergreen. You didn't find that in the house."

"No, sir : Harold told me where that was,

under the snow, just in the edge of the woods. There was a great bed of it in a shady place, where the sun couldn't reach it. That's what kept it so green. But it don't grow so thick; I twisted the vines together so to make it heavy, and I found some moss to mix with it. That makes two colors. Don't you think it looks prettier?"

"I think it does."

"And I found some ferns under the snow too. See, they are just as green as they are in summer; please, do you know their name? They aint like the brakes you see growing almost everywhere in summer."

"No, they are not," answered the young man, stooping to examine them more closely. "I don't know the name of the fern, although I think I must have seen it before."

"I never saw it till yesterday," responded Jessie, passing her hand lightly over the

fronds with a caressing motion. "It grows just as it lays now, the stems all laid down flat on the ground. I wish Miss Greenleaf was here. I guess she could tell. O Mr. Stuart! I wish you'd have her to keep school here."

"That is a wish I hear often repeated," now said Mr. Elliot. "I know nothing of Miss Greenleaf, except what Jessie has told me. But it must be that she is more than an ordinary teacher; and the children about here need a good school."

"They do; and, as the first step towards that, we need a good school-committee. I suppose you understand how such business is managed in a country town like this."

"It is managed in rather a loose way, generally; but we can control that in this district, if we all act together."

"Then let us do it. You lay the plans, and I will help carry them out."

“I will do what I can. There will be quite a large school, and some scholars who need a well-educated teacher.”

“They must have such a teacher,” said Edward Stuart decidedly. “Aunt Margaret will insist upon that.”

During this interview, nothing occurred to show that Richmond Elliot was in any way changed from what he had been; and his companion left him, quite forgetting the remark made by Mr. Bumstead. There were others to be seen, so that the twilight had waned before Miss Austen heard the ringing footfall of her nephew, as he came up the avenue.

Scarcely had he opened the door of the sitting-room, when he began to speak of what had been said in regard to sugar-making; and, as a result of the discussion which followed, a rude shanty was constructed, and all necessary preparations made for improv-

ing the season. Mr. Elliot, who seemed to have a general knowledge of all useful labor, was upon the ground with his chosen assistant, doing whatever required to be done. Limited as to the expense incurred, he surprised Mr. Stuart by expending so little of the amount placed at his disposal.

Meanwhile, the machinery of the mill moved with clock-like regularity. There was no lack of driving force or skilled operatives.

The latter might not have been above the average of men and women in their position when first they came to Austenville; but, in the few weeks which had intervened since then, thought and feeling had been strangely quickened. Something of this was due to the fact that they were engaged in a new enterprise, depending in a measure upon themselves for success; yet other influences, more potent than this, were asserting

their sway. The society meetings, ridiculed though they had been by some who preferred the fumes of rum and tobacco to the fragrance of flowers, had well begun the work they were intended to perform. Stolid faces brightened when some phenomenon of nature, which had never before received attention, was invested with its full dignity. Dull, half-closed eyes were opened wide to see some beauty but just revealed to their wondering gaze.

In twigs of hemlock, spruce, and pine, fringing a plain mirror, few would have recognized the expression of some undeveloped, yet positive taste; but Miss Austen, quick to read where others saw no trace of written language, judged the character of Norah Borine from the careful arrangement of such bits of green. She had seen Norah enter the house; and, passing soon after, paused involuntarily as the figure of the

child arrested her attention. A window was open directly opposite the little mirror ; and so absorbed was Norah in her work, that she might not have observed the presence of the lady, had not Jessie Elliot surprised her by a joyful exclamation.

Then a dark gypsy face confronted the two, as with a bound the young girl sprang to the floor. For an instant, a pair of black eyes flashed defiantly, when the long lashes drooped over them, hiding the tears which trembled in their depths.

“ O Norah, don’t feel bad ! ” now cried Jessie. “ Please don’t. I was coming to see you ; and, when I turned the corner, I was so glad to see Miss Austen, I called right out. That’s all. Have you been up to the woods ? ”

“ I only went a little ways,” was murmured in reply to this question.

“ Well, wont you go with me ? I want to go and see what I can find. There’s a little

bit of a brook where there's some nice green moss, and I want to get some of it. Harold told father to tell me about it. Wont you go too? and, please, wont you let us come in?"

Despite her shyness, there was nothing awkward in the manners of Norah Borine. Thus entreated, she opened the door to admit her visitors, and gave her hand to Miss Austen with timid grace.

"I am sorry I have troubled you; but I was so much pleased to see you decorating your room, that I forgot I had no right to watch you. Will you pardon me?"

"Why, yes, ma'am. It wa'n't any hurt, only I thought I was all alone," replied the child hesitatingly to this apology. "I wanted something like Jessie, but I couldn't find it."

"Then you have been to Jessie's cottage?"

“ Yes, ma’am, once.”

“ And I want you to come a great many times,” said Jessie. “ Go with me now, and we’ll get some evergreen. Perhaps we shall find something else that’s pretty too.”

“ I am sure you would have a good time with Jessie, and I’ll not stay to keep you from going,” added Miss Austen. “ Good-by.”

“ Oh, my ! didn’t she frighten me ? ” whispered Norah, when she could venture to speak without danger of being overheard.

“ You wont be frightened at her when you’ve been here a little while,” was the reassuring reply. “ She’s just as good as she can be, and she knows almost every thing.”

“ What every thing ? ”

“ Oh ! every thing about trees, and flowers, and birds, and brooks, and rivers, and stars, and lots of other things.”

“ How did she ever find out ? ”

“ I don’t know, only I suppose she begun when she was little, and kept right on learning all the time. That’s the way folks do. Haint you begun ? ”

“ I guess not much. I can read and spell, and I know the multiplication-table. Is that beginning ? ”

“ Yes, it’s beginning real well. But come. I shant have time to go to the woods this afternoon, unless we start pretty soon. I must be home time enough to get a good supper for father. When he stays away all day, I always mean to have something nice for his supper.”

“ Where is he ? ”

“ Making sugar on the hill, and he says I may go over with him some time. Perhaps you can go too. Shouldn’t you like to ? ”

“ He’d be there, wouldn’t he ? ”

“ Yes, and Harold too. I shouldn’t want to go unless they were. Now let’s start.

You take a basket to put things in. I always do, so I can bring home all I want to."

During their walk, Norah did not talk much, but Jessie was fully equal to the occasion; and, when they reached the woods, there was no need of further effort on their part. Here was the brook, rippling over mossy stones and springing sedges, gleaming like silver wherever the sunlight flecked its surface; and this furnished an interesting theme of conversation.

"There'll be lots of pretty things growing here by and by," remarked Jessie, after taking a survey of the ground.

"Yes," answered Norah, and then proceeded to make a closer investigation for herself. "See here," she exclaimed, some time later. "Aint these buds that'll make flowers? They're close down to the ground, and they was all covered with dead leaves. And here are some leaves with awful long stems that I guess belong to them."

“ Oh, I know what you’ve found. It’s liverwort. I forgot to look for it so soon. I’m so glad! That’s just what we want to put with our green moss. If we take it up with some of the roots, and keep it wet all the time, it wont know but what it’s staying right here in the woods.”

“ Why! does it know any thing at all? ” asked Norah with a look of surprise.

“ No, I don’t suppose it does, only that’s a way I have of talking,” was the reply. “ There’s lots of liverwort here, but we wont take any more than we want now. We can come again, and see how fast it grows. There’s another name for it besides liverwort. Look at the leaves, and see how different the two sides are. I’ve heard somebody call it mouse-ear; and one lobe of the leaf taken all by itself does look some like a mouse’s ear. You see there’s three parts to the leaf. Miss Greenleaf called

them lobes. We're going to have more to carry home than I expected. There'll be queer little things come up in the moss. Miss Greenleaf used to have a tray made of zinc, that she kept moss in all winter; and she let every thing grow that come up. If she was only here, she'd tell us about things."

"Does she know about every thing the same as Miss Austen does?"

This question puzzled Jessie. She knew there was a vast difference between the two, whom she regarded with equal admiration. One possessed the culture which wealth could easily command; while the other, despite her poverty, had gained much of the same culture. One had gathered heavy sheaves of golden grain; yet the other, gleaning in the same exhaustless fields, had brought away grain no less golden. They were unlike, but not thus did they seem to the child.

“ I can’t tell which knows the most,” she said deliberately. “ Miss Austen knows most about some things, and Miss Greenleaf knows most about others. I guess Miss Austen has always lived in a grand house, with books and pictures all round her ; but Miss Greenleaf lives in a little bit of a cottage, no larger than ours ; and she has to earn all the money she has. She has to take care of her mother too ; and she wears ever so old dresses, only they’re just as clean and pretty as can be. There are vines all over her house, and flowers growing all round it in summer ; and there’s a great rock back of it covered with a grape-vine.”

“ How did she get so many things if she’s poor ? ”

“ Why, she just gets them herself. She plants the flower seeds, and they come up and grow. She told me all about the grape-vine. She found it in the woods, and took it

home, and planted it beside the rock. It didn't take money to do it. She had lots of pictures ; but she made the frames of moss and acorns and beech-nuts and shells, and almost every thing you can think of. I used to think, if I ever had a house, I'd make it look just like hers."

"And does it?" asked Norah.

"Oh, no! I haven't had time to get half as many things as she has; but I've begun, and I mean to keep on. You've begun too, and that's what made Miss Austen stop to look at you when you were fixing your glass. I guess she was thinking you was just such a little girl as she liked."

"Do you suppose she did?"

"Yes, I most know it. Now you'll put the liverwort in a saucer, and pretty soon you'll have some flowers; but we must get the evergreen next. The snow's all gone off from it, but it's real green."

A week's companionship within doors would not have drawn these children so closely together, as did the hour spent beneath the arching trees, where Nature invited to confidence by a revelation of her own wondrous beauties. Whatever there had been of reserve on the part of Norah Borine vanished under the genial influences which surrounded her. She asked questions rapidly, peering into sheltered nooks, and upturning the wet brown leaves which concealed some germ of fern or shrub. Her enthusiasm was fully aroused, and with her treasures she started homeward, resolved to make the most of what she possessed.





CHAPTER IV.

THE SUGAR-CAMP.

THERE had been an abundant flow of sap throughout the day, and Mr. Elliot was in haste for his supper, that he might return to the sugar-camp, where he proposed to spend the night; but he was never too much pressed for time to sympathize with his daughter in her plans and pleasures. The clusters of buds, curled so closely to the mat of fibrous roots, that the casual observer would have failed to see them, received from him all proper attention.

“Did you ever see the flowers?” asked Jessie.

“I don’t know,” he replied. “Perhaps I have trodden upon them a hundred times.”

“Why, father, how could you?” was responded in a grieved tone.

“Just as you run over the dandelions and buttercups and clovers. You don’t mind any thing about them.”

“I know it; but you see they’re all round everywhere ; and then I don’t step on them when they first come. I always pick the first white clovers and buttercups. They’re real pretty. But there aint so many liver-worts ; and, besides, the flowers are so small, it seems more as though you ought to be careful of them. When you come home, you’ll see how nice I’ll have them fixed. I wish I had a little zinc tray like Miss Greenleaf’s. She made it out of a piece of old zinc somebody gave her. Oh, dear ! I wish I knew how to do every thing the same as she does.”

“You can learn, my child.”

“Perhaps I can,” she replied cheerfully ; and, turning from her spoils of the wood, she seated herself at the table.

After her father left her, she did not mind being alone. She knew she had nothing to fear ; and, if she waked, the moonlight streamed in through the narrow window, like the re-assuring smile of a friend.

A rare night it was to spend in the open air. Richmond Elliot had often looked up to the stars from a couch upon the ground, but there had been no night to him like this. He was isolated from the world. Above and around him, there was only the presence of an infinite God. The breeze which stirred the tree-tops was like an accusing voice whispering of unrepented sins ; and the soft, faint murmur, heard even when the stillness of a forest is most profound, echoed these accusings.

He was alone ; and yet there was no escape from One who knew his inmost thoughts. He performed his work mechanically. He gazed into the glowing fire, and saw it not. He could not sleep. Restlessly he paced to and fro, unheeding the obstacles in his path. There was a fearful struggle in his breast. He no longer doubted the existence of a supreme Being, to whom he must give account of his wasted life. He believed, and therefore trembled. As the morning dawned, he addressed himself to the task of controlling and concealing his emotions. He was not ready to confess himself a sinner against the laws of God.

Harold Dorsey came early to relieve him of his watch ; and looking around, said, " Why, Mr. Elliot, didn't you lay down all last night ? "

" No, I didn't care to lie down," was the reply.

“Then you must be very tired.”

“I am not at all tired. The night seemed short;” and in truth it had so seemed to the speaker. He had been engrossed in thought, and taken no note of time. “Jessie is coming up by and by, to bring my breakfast,” he hastened to add. “I told her she might come as soon after sunrise as she could get ready. I have done a good night’s work in the way of boiling. I hope you have rested.”

“Yes, sir, I always sleep; but I had a strange dream last night. I thought grand-sir came and sat down by my bed, and told me he made a mistake in the way he brought me up. He said I ought to have begun to read the Bible as soon as I could read at all, and now I must make up for the time I’d lost. So this morning, though I was in a hurry, I stopped to read a chapter, and one verse in it was, ‘The trees of

the Lord are full of sap ; the cedars of Lebanon which he hath planted.' There's a good deal in the Bible about the cedars of Lebanon. Mr. Peavy told me that the preacher, Solomon, knew all about all kinds of trees and plants. There's a verse somewhere that says he talked about trees, from the cedar tree in Lebanon, to the hyssop that springs out of the wall ; and about beasts and fowl, and creeping things, and fishes. How grand it would be to know so much ! ”

“ Yes, it would. But do you suppose anybody ever did really know so much ? ”

“ Of course I do. The Bible says so, and what the Bible says is true. It's a strange book.”

“ Is it like what you expected it would be ? ” asked Mr. Elliot, not so much because he cared how it was regarded by his young friend, as to prevent the conversation from drifting to unwelcome topics.

“No, it aint like what I expected. I expected it would be all about one thing, and it’s about almost every thing. I wonder everybody don’t read it. Do you read it, Mr. Elliot?”

Harold Dorsey looked earnestly into the face of the man to whom he propounded this question, and who replied after some hesitation, “No, I don’t read it. It’s a book I have never cared to read. But I am glad to have you read it, and glad of all the comfort it gives you”

“But it’s God’s book, Mr. Elliot, and you are one of his children. That’s what Miss Austen said in the meeting, and she said God loved us. Oh, I was so glad to hear that! I’ve always wanted somebody to love me. I don’t know but what grandsir did, but it wa’n’t the same way you love Jessie. I wish I belonged to somebody, the same as she belongs to you.” No response being

made to this outcry of his heart, Harold said, "These are the Lord's trees. They are full of sap."

"They *are* full of sap ; and the sap will be wasting, unless we take care of it."

This was spoken more sharply than Richmond Elliot was accustomed to speak, but the sharpness was not observed. His companion's attention was fixed upon the trees, now invested with a new beauty because of their relation to the great Creator. The words, "Are you dreaming?" roused the latter from his revery, and sent him to his work.

Far off on the mountain-tops the sun was shining, while the shadows of night still brooded over the lower landscape ; then, as the morning advanced, one by one the grand old hills were bathed in its splendor, until like a flood of glory the light swept adown the valley.

Jessie Elliot looked around her joyously, and with reverent heart acknowledged the goodness of Him who has made all things beautiful in their season. She stopped for a moment to speak to Norah Borine, who brought forward the miniature garden she had arranged from her scant possessions.

“It’s just lovely,” was the comment of her friend. “You’ve put the liverwort and moss together so they make a picture. It’s prettier than my saucer, a good deal. We’ll go again some time. I’m going to the sugar place, to stay to-day. I wish you were going too.”

“You’re good to wish so, but I’d rather go where there aint anybody. I’ve got to do the dishes, and sweep the house, and get dinner, and clean up; and then perhaps I’ll go up to the brook alone. I know how to look now. I’m glad you learnt me.”

“And I’m glad you’ve learned,” was

Jessie's hearty response as she went forward with her well-filled basket.

She was in haste to reach the maple-grove, yet there was much to tempt her to linger on the way. Birds were flitting in and out among the trees, chirping merrily, as if in anticipation of the bright summer weather. Squirrels darted across her path, or whisked away from rustic breakfast-rooms in which she had surprised them. She stayed her steps, wishing she could follow the birds and squirrels throughout the day, and learn how they employed their time. She wondered how life seemed to them, and if indeed they could think. But watching and wondering would never bring her to her father.

A glad call announced her arrival, and Harold was first to greet her. "I'm glad you've come," he said heartily. "I've something to show you."

"What is it?" she asked.

“A tree covered with the longest moss I ever saw.”

“I shall like to see it. But I must get breakfast first. Have you roasted the potatoes?”

“They’re in the ashes, and the coffee’s making. Your father said ’twas most time for you to come. I brought some milk to put in the coffee, and Mrs. Peavy said she wanted you to come there some time to-day.”

“I’ll try to, but I wish they could come up here. I think it’s beautiful to stay in the woods. I’m going to see how many different kinds of things I can find. Where’s your table?”

“The bench is all the table we have, and the stumps are our chairs. You may have mine. I guess your father’s tired, though he says he aint. He didn’t lay down all night. What’s the matter with him, Jessie?”

“ I don’t know. I didn’t know any thing was the matter with him. Is there ? ”

“ Perhaps not, only when I can’t sleep there’s something the matter with me. But there he is coming. He’ll help you about getting breakfast. It aint just like cooking in the house.”

“ O father ! I’m so glad,” exclaimed the young girl. “ Isn’t it a real happy morning ? ”

“ It’s a real happy looking child that calls me father,” was replied.

“ And are you real glad to have her call you father ? ”

“ Glad ! ” he repeated, looking at her with all his heart in his eyes. “ I am thankful.”

“ And I am thankful to call you father,” she said, springing to his side. “ I thank God every day for having given me such a father.”

Harold stood just outside the shanty, yet

quite near enough to the occupants to hear every word of this short colloquy; and felt himself doubly alone for the close relationship which existed between the father and child.

“Breakfast is ready,” called a musical voice not long after, as he was returning from higher up on the hill, with two overflowing pails of sap. “Come, Harold. We’ve got a nice breakfast. I made some cakes last night, after father came back up here, on purpose to surprise him. I made some for you too, and I guess you’ll like them. Come.”

Coffee served in tin cups, bread and meat eaten from fragrant chips, and the cakes which Jessie took daintily from her basket, furnished a breakfast which no one need despise. To those who shared it, it was positively luxurious.

“Now you can take your own time to

wash the dishes," said Mr. Elliot to his daughter.

"There's not many to wash," she replied, laughing merrily. "I'll rinse the cups, and burn the plates, and scatter the crumbs for the birds on that mossy knoll. I've heard some chickadees around here."

"Plenty of them," responded Harold. "When you're ready, I want you to go and see the old mother tree. It's most up to the top of the hill. It's so large, and looks so grand and old, I call it the mother tree. I haint been there this morning. I ought to go pretty soon, but I'll wait for you."

He had not long to wait, neither was he obliged to moderate his pace to suit his companion. She was accustomed to rapid walking, and while choosing the firmest resting-places for her feet, sped rapidly over the ground. There had been a light frost during the night; enough to cover with a thin rime

whatever was exposed to the atmosphere ; and now, when touched by the rays of the sun, there was a sparkle and glitter, like the flashing of myriads of tiny gems.

The branches of the mother tree were covered with *usnea barbata*, the most beautiful of our lichens, when seen as it was displayed that morning. The frost-crystals were fast dissolving, and yet clinging to every fibre and filament of the delicate green drapery. Each disk held a pellucid drop, filling it to its utmost capacity, and gleaming with rainbow tints. The entire growth of lichen seemed as instinct with life as the fairest flowers, when the dew has touched them with its magic brush ; not dry and withered and clasping, but soft and fresh, outspreading, drooping, or erect, and well deserving the admiration lavished upon it.

“ Why, I never saw any thing like that before ! ” cried Jessie with uplifted hands.

“Never in all my life! O Harold! aint it a new kind of moss?”

“No, it’s the same I’ve seen a hundred times, and so have you; only it wa’n’t so long, and there wa’n’t so much of it on one tree. It’s wet, too, and that’s one thing makes it so handsome. When it gets dry, and the sun don’t shine on it, it wont look as it does now. I saw it yesterday morning, and I thought this old mother tree must be the handsomest in the world. You can look at it as long as you want to. I’m glad you like it. I thought you would. When I’ve gathered the sap round here, I’ll come back, and get you all the moss you want.”

“Thank you. You’re real good to me, Harold.”

“Am I?” he asked wistfully. “I want to be good, but I don’t know how.”

“You don’t? Why, it’s just doing right all the time, just as well as you can. You know how to do that.”

“ Yes, and I try.”

“ So do I; and, when I want not to do what I ought to, I ask God to help me. You see, sometimes I get most out of patience. Don't you?”

“ I don't know as I do. I always did what grandsir told me, and he never told me but once.”

This, then, was the secret of Harold Dorsey's patient persistence in whatever he attempted. He had not done what he *would*, but what he was required to do. He was only beginning to exercise his own free will, and judge for himself what was best for him to do.

“ What a queer boy you are !” said Jessie.

“ Yes, I suppose I am,” he answered a little sadly. “ I don't think I'm like anybody else.”

“ No, you aint. But you're good, and father says you have remarkable talents. So

you needn't be sorry you aint like anybody else. We don't want you to be."

Comforted by this assurance, Harold left his companion; and when he came back, after attending to his duties, he found her still gazing at the gigantic tree, and still finding new beauties to admire.

"It seems like a great temple here, where people ought to come and worship God," murmured the young girl softly. "Had you thought of that?"

"No, I hadn't. But I ought to, because these are the Lord's trees."

"Of course they are. Every thing is the Lord's. You and I and everybody belong to him; so we can't ever be alone, because God is everywhere. He's right round us here in the woods. How strange it is!"

"Yes. I don't understand it."

"We don't need to understand it. We've only just got to believe it. There's lots and

lots of things I can't understand. How strange it is, the way things grow! There's a dry seed put into the ground, and then it sprouts, and sends a root down into the ground, and a stem into the air. Now, what do you suppose makes it do so?"

"I don't know."

"I don't know either; but I know God has something to do with it, and if it wa'n't for him there wouldn't be any thing in the world."

"No, I don't suppose there would. I'm glad I belong to him."

"So am I glad I do, and I care a great deal more about all these things because they belong to him too. Now I'll tell you what I'm going to do about the moss," added Jessie, as her mind reverted to the object which had moved her to this expression of devout thought. "I'll leave it here till I'm ready to go away. Then I'll carry

home the nicest pieces you can get for me, and leave them out doors to-night, so they'll look just as they do here. Wouldn't that be a good way?"

"Yes; and, if there aint frost enough on it in the morning, you can sprinkle it with water. I told Mr. Peavy about it; and he said he used to call such moss maple flowers, though he knew 'twas different from common flowers."

"Oh! they aint flowers at all, though I aint quite sure what to call it. I mean to show it to Miss Austen, and ask her whether it's lichen or moss. Then I'll tell you."

Mr. Elliot watched for the appearance of his daughter, rejoicing when he saw her coming towards him. Never had she seemed so dear to him as then, and never had he so much desired her presence. He was gloomy; and, but for her, he might have grown sullen and morose. He could not

frown when she looked up into his face glad and happy that he was her father. As she talked of all which appealed to her love of the beautiful, he became interested, and, for the time, forgot the guilt of his past life. He encouraged her to expect a rich harvest from the sodden turf and moss-grown rocks; and, when the sun rose higher in the heavens, she commenced her search. She knew where to look for the liverwort, of which she found a far more luxuriant growth than by the little brook. Not far away was the mitchella, known to her as partridge-vine; a delicate evergreen, whose creeping stems, thickly set with dark, coriaceous leaves and scarlet berries, are always a welcome addition to the most elegant, as well as the most simple bouquets. Near at hand, yet in slightly different soil, was another evergreen, — the checkerberry, with spicy leaves which seem to have gathered to

themselves the most delicate aromas of the wild wood. Its fruit too, of coral hue, is as beautiful to the eye as it is delicious to the taste.

The supply of berries was less abundant than in more favorable seasons, when the ground is covered with a mantle of snow through all the winter months; and of these the birds had taken their full share; yet Jessie Elliot found enough to serve her purpose. Huge clusters of lichen were torn from the mother tree, and, when she could carry no more, she reluctantly bade adieu to the hillside grove.





CHAPTER V.

OLD AND YOUNG.

WELL, I never!" exclaimed Mrs. Peavy.
"What a girl you be for getting every thing that grows in the woods! I used to like to go into the woods when I was a little girl; but I didn't get a chance very often, unless mother wanted some roots for beer or medicine. I used to look at the flowers and trees, but I didn't think so much of them as you do."

"What did you get for beer?" asked Jessie.

"Well, we got a good many things. I used to make it every year till lately; and

now I do sometimes, though Mr. Peavy don't care so much about it as he used to. I always made what I called *spring* beer at sugar-time."

"Why, how could you tell where to find the roots before the leaves came up?"

"We couldn't. We calculated to get our roots in the fall, and have them all ready. You see, in old times, folks didn't have tea and coffee as common as they do now. Any way, country folks didn't; and so they contrived to make drinks out of what grew right round them, and didn't cost any thing. I'll tell you how my mother used to make beer in the spring, if you want me to."

"I do, Mrs. Peavy. I always like to hear about such things."

This was just the reply the good woman expected, and she proceeded with her description: "Well, she'd take some maple sap, if there was plenty of it, and put it

over the fire in a big brass kettle. Then she'd put in dried pumpkin, and sweet apple parings, and the different kinds of roots we happened to have in the house. She'd burn two or three ears of corn till they was pretty black, and put them in, and some hops. Then she'd keep it biling till the strength was all biled out of every thing, and then strain it off, and put in some emptyings to make it work. That was the way she did with maple sap, and pretty much the same with birch sap; only, if you wanted it much sweet, you needed to bile it down more."

"Birch sap! Why, Mrs. Peavy, what do you mean?"

"I mean that we made beer of birch sap after the maple sap had done running. You knew there was sap in birch trees, didn't you?"

"Yes, ma'am. There's sap in all trees, else they couldn't grow, but all kinds aint fit to drink."

“No ; but the black birch is a real spicy tree all through ; and seems as though ’twas fuller of sap than any other. There used to be a big one grow on a bank not fur from our house, that father tapped every spring. We always made one cask of beer from it, and we thought ’twas the best flavored of all. We used to bile up the little twigs so ; and, — there, Jessie, ’taint no use to tell any more ; but there’s wholesome things growing all through the woods. I knew what they was by sight ; and most all of them had some kind of a name, but likely they wa’n’t book-names. I’ve heard there was books all about trees and flowers and plants.”

“Yes, Mrs. Peavy, there is ; and I want to learn what’s in the books.”

“So I would, child. But if I couldn’t do but one, seems as though I should rather go all round, and see the things growing, than to read about them in books.”

“So should I; but, you see, I want to do both.”

“Well, now, it’s clever to see such a bright young face,” said the old man, as he came into the kitchen. “I knew you was sent for, but I didn’t know but something’d keep you from coming. It’s a fine place where your father’s making sugar. When I wa’n’t no older than you be, I never got tired watching the sap run.”

“I didn’t get tired,” responded Jessie. “I wanted to go home in season to get father’s supper, and Harold said I was to come here.”

“I wanted you to come,” responded her hostess. “I’ve got some flower-roots I want to give you. Five or six years ago I see a flower that I thought was mighty handsome, and somebody give me a root, and told me how to take care of it; and it’s kept gaining ever since. The roots look like onions, and

there's another name for them besides roots, but I've forgot what 'tis."

"Is it bulbs?"

"Yes, that's it; and I want you to have some of them, so you can set them out in a box, and get them started in good season. That's the way I do, and I always have good luck; but folks round here that I've give them to don't seem to."

The precious bulbs were brought forward; and soon after Jessie started on her homeward walk, with the lichen trailing over her shoulders, and her basket crowded with vines and mosses. Coming out from the woods, she saw Norah Borine a little in advance, and called to her.

Her friend turned with the exclamation, "See what I've found! I've so much like what I had yesterday, and other things too. I didn't know such things grew. What makes them?"

“God makes them.”

“Does he? Then why don't everybody look? Why didn't I know? Mother never told me. Perhaps it's because she has to work every day. I don't mean to work the way she does. I don't like the looms and frames, and the dirty smell. I'd rather go in the woods, and find things.”

“But somebody must work,” responded Jessie. “Somebody must earn money.”

“Yes, I know; but mightn't there be other ways? You said Miss Greenleaf earned money. She don't do it in a mill, does she?”

“No, she don't. She teaches school, and sews, and I guess she makes pictures to sell. She don't paint them same as other folks do. She makes them out of leaves, and moss, and all kinds of little bits. I aint sure about her selling them, and I didn't used to think she did; but lately I've thought

more how she earns money, and I guess she does. She hadn't made a great many when I came away."

"Why can't we make them?"

"Perhaps you can, but I shouldn't know how without having her tell me. I want her to come and keep our school this summer, and I most believe she will."

"I wish she would. You tell Miss Austen. Grandmother says Miss Austen can do any thing she wants to. Everybody does what she says."

"I know they do, and she's so good everybody ought to. Don't you like her?"

"I don't know yet. Grandmother and mother do."

"But they don't go to meeting Sunday evenings, and she wants everybody to go. Why don't they, Norah?"

"Because," and the speaker looked angrily at her companion. "Because it aint the way

for us," she continued. "We are Catholics. Didn't you know it?"

"I don't know what you mean," was responded.

"Jessie Elliot, be you telling me the truth?"

"I always tell the truth, Norah. I'm sorry if I've said any thing to make you feel bad. I didn't mean to. I don't know what Catholic is, but I hope it's something good. Good-by."

The non-attendance of Mrs. Rady, Mrs. Borine, and Norah, upon the sabbath evening meetings, had troubled Jessie; yet this was the first time she had ventured to speak of it. She resolved now to appeal to her father; and, when he came, she asked almost immediately, "What is it to be a Catholic?" adding, "Norah says she is a Catholic."

"Of course she is, or her mother and grandmother are, and I suppose that amounts

to the same thing. She would be likely to think as they do."

"But what is it, father? It's different from what Miss Austen is, aint it?"

"Very different, Jessie. Miss Austen believes in your Bible, and confesses her sins to God; but most Catholics know very little about the Bible. They confess their sins to the priest, who gives them absolution upon certain conditions. Sometimes they are obliged to perform severe penances in order to obtain forgiveness, and always they must pay money. I can't explain it all to you now, because I must have my supper, and go back. I don't wish to leave Harold alone. Perhaps Norah will tell you some time what she has been taught to believe; and, if you ask her, perhaps she will go to meeting with you Sunday evening."

"Wont you go too, father?"

"I can't tell till the time comes. I'm not

willing to let the sap waste because it's Sunday, though Miss Austen thinks it would be as well. Mr. Gleason says there'll be a change of weather before the week's out, and I'm looking for more snow."

Miss Austen had questioned whether it was right that the fire should be kept burning in the sugar camp throughout the sabbath, yet had finally yielded to the representations of necessity, upon condition that no work should be done which could be consistently avoided. This condition had been faithfully observed, so that a solemn stillness brooded over the spot, making it a fitting place for communion with God. The hour spent where Christians talked of the marvelous goodness of God, which had crowned their lives, could not have been more impressive to Richmond Elliot, than was the same hour, spent in watching the glowing embers, and seeing in their midst, as it were,

a hand writing the accusations which must forever stand against him. He knew there were those who would remember him in their prayers, and he felt the need of such remembrance.

His little daughter had thought lovingly of him in his loneliness, but she knew nothing of the struggle going on in his mind. Something she saw unlike his former self, yet little dreamed its cause. While with him in the grove all this was forgotten, and when at home she was too much occupied with other interests to give it a thought.

“I hope Miss Austen or Mrs. Bumstead will come to see me this evening,” she said, as her father bade her good-by, and then she busied herself in arranging miniature gardens, smiling at the result of her efforts. So absorbed was she in her work that the door of the cottage was opened before she observed that any one was approaching, and,

turning, she saw the very face she most wished to see. "Oh, I am so glad!" she exclaimed.

"I should know by your looks that you are glad," said Margaret Austen.

"I couldn't help being glad," was the reply. "I've been glad all day, and now I'm gladder than ever. I wanted you to come. Please look at the moss I brought home. Harold got it from an old tree, he calls the mother tree, it's so large. Isn't it beautiful?"

"Very; but it is not moss, it is lichen."

"Well, I didn't know. I've heard folks call it moss, and it grows on trees."

"Lichens grow on trees; and there is a very decided difference between them and mosses, which botanists recognize at once. Each variety, too, has a specific name."

"And do you know them all?"

"I know but very few. When your Miss



Greenleaf comes, I think I must study with her."

"And is she coming?"

"I hope so. We shall try to induce her to come. I have written to inquire about her, and your praise is fully indorsed. She must be a remarkable young lady."

"Oh, Miss Austen, she's just as good as she can be! But you see she's poor, and has to work all the time, else I don't suppose she'd have any thing at all. But what can she do with her mother? and who'll take care of her little cottage if she comes here?"

"I don't know. But if it is best for her to come there will be a way provided, as Mrs. Bumstead says."

"And when will you know certain whether she comes, or not?"

"In a fortnight perhaps."

"Oh! if she comes I shall be perfectly happy. I've told Norah about her, and she

wants her for a teacher. I know every body'll like her. If she was here now she'd make something real handsome out of what I brought home."

"I think *you* have made something very pretty."

"I think so too, but it isn't like what she'd do," replied Jessie frankly. "I know when it's all done right, but I can't do it. Norah can though."





CHAPTER VI.

ORPHANED.

ALICE GREENLEAF moved softly across the room, and, opening a door leading into the little "storm-entry," passed through, and stood where the cool night wind fanned her throbbing brow. She was alone; and, turn whichever way she might, there was neither sight nor sound of human life.

From her childhood she had depended upon herself, seeking little sympathy from others, yet giving in largest measure wherever there was need of generous words or deeds. Her mother, a delicate woman with

little strength of mind or body, had clung to her through all the years of widowhood, without once finding the trusted support give way. Now this mother was sick, — it might be unto death; and the daughter's heart cried out for some token that she was remembered beyond her cottage home.

She knew there were those who would come to her at the first intimation that they were desired. She had chosen to remain alone: yet as the hours went by she was oppressed with a painful sense of isolation. Her hands were clasped, and her lips moved as if in prayer, when a faint murmur recalled her to the house. A moment later she was standing by the bedside of her mother, whose pallid face and fast glazing eyes told but too plainly of the death-angel's presence.

“Bless you, my Alice! God bless you, my child, and keep you in all your way! I

have done little for you, but you have done much for me. I am going."

"O mother, mother, don't leave me! Don't leave me!"

No voice replied to this wild cry of agony. There were a few struggles, and all was over. Then Alice Greenleaf bowed her head, and wept long and bitterly. When the morning dawned, she sat motionless, gazing into the face of the dead. A neighbor raised the latch, and entered.

"I couldn't sleep for thinking of you," was said in a subdued tone. "'Twa'n't right to leave you here alone last night, and I'd a good mind to come over before daylight. You poor child, you!" added the woman as she saw what had transpired. "If I'd known how 'twas, I'd come any way. To think there wa'n't nobody here when your mother died! What time was it?"

"I don't know. I didn't mind the time.

It was all so sudden, I didn't think of it. It seemed as though the whole world had forgotten me."

"No wonder, child, — no wonder. My heart misgave me about you, though I didn't think your mother'd go so soon;" and the speaker threw her arms protectingly around the orphaned girl. "Now come into the sitting-room, and let me shut this door. I'll start up the fire while you lie down and rest till I've got a cup of tea ready for you."

Alice yielded to the gentle force which drew her to a low couch, and allowed herself to be dictated without a thought of self-assertion; thankful there was some one to care for her.

Directly, a signal notified others that help was needed at the cottage; and, before an hour had passed, others came to prepare the lifeless body for burial. Two days went by like a strange, troubled dream, from which

one struggles vainly to awake; and then there was a quiet funeral, where neighbors came together to manifest their respect for the dead, and their sympathy for the living.

“Don’t go back there alone,” said a kind-hearted man, when, after the last rites, Alice desired to be carried home. “Any way, don’t go to-night. Come home with us, and take time to think what’s best.”

“I’d best go now,” was the tearful reply. “I shall be better there. You are very good, and I thank you, but I prefer to go home.”

The bit of a cottage, looking to the south, was an attractive feature of the landscape that afternoon. Some evergreen trees stood at a little distance, and there was a harmony in its surroundings which a practised eye would recognize at once. It was like its owner, plain and homely; yet as far removed from ugliness as are the outlines of some

rugged hill, over which a misty cloud may at any moment throw a veil of loveliness.

There was now only herself for the owner to consider. There was no further need for a division of her wages. She could command larger opportunities and privileges. But of this she did not think in her profound sense of bereavement. For the time there seemed to be nothing more for her in life. She had lost all incentive to action.

Other hands than hers had loaded the shelves of her pantry with food, and other hands had spread the table in anticipation of her return. The last rays of the setting sun fell upon her choicest plants, still beautiful in their symmetry and luxuriance, although their wealth of bloom lay close beneath a coffin lid. Not a picture had been displaced. There was not one shadow more upon the wall than had been there a week before; and yet for Alice Greenleaf, all the brightness had gone from her home.

But there was work waiting for her, and only the next day she must decide where this work should be done. Wearily she arose in the morning, replying listlessly to the greetings of the friend who had remained with her. She could not eat. Despite the kindly urging, her breakfast was untasted. She had just left the table when a letter was brought.

“I didn’t come with it last night because I thought you wouldn’t want to be disturbed,” said the bearer. “I hope ’taint any thing to take you away from us, Alice. We don’t want to spare you. If you’ll stay right amongst us, same as you always have, we’ll do the best we can for you, and see that you aint left to be too lonesome.”

“Thank you. You are all very good to me. I don’t know why I should leave you.”

Later, she opened the letter, glancing

down the page to read the name of the writer, "Margaret Austen." It was merely a business epistle, asking Miss Greenleaf to accept the position of teacher in Austenville; but it was characterized by a friendliness of tone, and a subtle sympathy, which appealed strongly to the heart of her to whom it was addressed. She remembered Jessie Elliot with affection, and, considering the inducements offered, was inclined to reject all other proposals, and test her ability amid new surroundings.

Many were disappointed at her decision, and many expressed the opinion that she was acting unwisely. She would be going from home, where she was known and appreciated. Who would care for her as would her old friends?

But one person approved of her intention; and she, of all, could least afford to lose such a friend. Mrs. Dawson, a widow with whom

the world had dealt hardly, and who had often gained strength and courage from Alice Greenleaf, said, "Now is your opportunity. You may not have another so desirable. I have faith to believe that Providence is leading you, and you will do well to follow. I don't know how Jimmy and I can live without you, but I hope you will go."

Jimmy, whose distorted feet made him painfully sensitive to every word and look of those with whom he came in contact, could not indorse his mother's wish. Looking up into the face of his dearly loved teacher, his eyes filled with tears at the thought of her going where he could not see her. There was for him but one consolation: his home was to be in the very cottage he had learned to regard as the "prettiest house in the world," and within a week he was established there. Thus Miss Greenleaf

conferred a favor upon others, while subserving her own interests.

So the way was prepared for her change of residence, in a manner Margaret Austen had not expected, and certainly would not have desired. In the midst of a driving snow-storm her letter was given into this lady's hands, and the superscription closely scanned before it was opened. The chirography was clear and strong; graceful, too, despite its boldness.

"I know I shall like her," was the hearty comment.

"I trust we shall all like her," responded Edward Stuart. "She has some character," he added, after a careful reading of what she had written. "Mr. Elliot will have no further trouble about a teacher, except to provide her with a good boarding place."

"That must be done, of course, even if we take her here, although it would be

better to find a place for her among the people. Perhaps you may as well see Mr. Elliot this evening. He must have suspended sugar-making before this time."

"I presume he has, but he would stay on the hill as long as any thing could be gained by it. I can go to his house; and, if he is not there, I shall be sure of a welcome from Jessie."

Mr. Elliot was hastening home, when the young man accosted him, inquiring why he had not returned home before dark.

"Because there was work to be done," he responded. "Now I've left every thing safe at the camp, and well boarded up, so there's no danger of accident; and to-morrow morning there'll be a chance to bring away what sirup we've got on hand. Then, if Mrs. Bumstead can spare the back kitchen stove, we'll have it sugared off in good shape. I bought an extra pan to use for that especial purpose."

“All right. I’ve no doubt you can have the stove, and plenty of help with it. I was going to your house.”

“Then keep right along. You can talk with Jessie while I eat my supper; for eat I shall, unless important business is to be transacted. A day in the woods gives a man a famous appetite, and, fortunately, I always find enough to satisfy me. I am beginning to feel like a man again, Mr. Stuart.”

“You are certainly regarded as a very capable and intelligent man. For us you are the right man in the right place. Gray says you’ve helped him more than anybody else, except Aunt Margaret.”

Here their conversation was interrupted by Jessie, who opened the door, exclaiming, “How long you staid away, father! I’ve been looking for you this great while.”

“Well, now two of us have come, perhaps that will make up for my being late,” replied her father

“And I have news which will pay you for waiting,” remarked Mr. Stuart, smiling down into her eager face. “Miss Greenleaf is coming.”

“Oh, I’m just as glad! I thought ’twas dreadful lonesome when it began to snow, but now I don’t care only for the poor little birds. I suppose they thought winter was all gone, the same as I did, and now it’s come back again. There aint a seed left in the sunflower heads; and all the weeds and grass are covered up, except by the old shed, where there are some little bare patches. But I’m so glad Miss Greenleaf’s coming! Now I shall study botany, and learn all I want to know.”

While talking thus freely, Jessie was not unmindful of her father’s comfort. Two or three dishes of food, and a pot of steaming coffee, were placed upon the table.

The visitor watched her quick, deft move-

ments admiringly ; noting the happy smile irradiating her face, and contrasting her present life with what it must have been only a few months before.

Strange that a man who could so nobly bear his part in all responsibility should have fallen so low ; and stranger still, that, having thus fallen, he should have striven to rise from his degradation !





CHAPTER VII.

PAST FINDING OUT.

ALL night the snow fell heavily ; but with the morning, the sun appeared in its splendor, like a strong man rejoicing to run a race. Forest trees, whose long, flexible branches yielded to their burden, trailed to the very ground ; while the ever-greens were jewelled like an Eastern princess whose robes are heavy with the wealth of a kingdom.

Only here and there had the wind swept aside the fleecy mantle whose dazzling whiteness no painter's art can ever rival. Spring had suddenly vanished, and in her stead stern winter again held sway.

“Strange weather,” said Mr. Bumstead, removing his hat, and threading his iron-gray hair with his fingers. “Strange weather,” he repeated. “There’s no telling what to expect from one day to another. Sometimes it’s one thing, and sometimes another. Late snows don’t do any hurt though. They fill up the springs, and that helps along.”

“What a sponge the ground is!” remarked Miss Austen, who had overheard the foregoing soliloquy. “It sometimes seems to have absorbed all that it can, and yet it will soon dispose of its share of a snow like this; holding the moisture in reserve, until the heat of summer brings it to the surface. Mr. Bumstead is probably thinking that it will help to swell our brook, and so make sure that the supply will not fail.”

“I presume he does think of that,” replied Edward Stuart. “His whole mind is

given to the mill and its interests. The farm and the sugar-making count for nothing with him."

"Sugar-making will count for something with Mrs. Bumstead and Robert. They are making great preparations to assist Mr. Elliot. The back kitchen is already swept and warmed."

Just then the sugar-maker himself came up the well cleared avenue, and was greeted heartily.

"The top of the morning to you! You look in good working order."

"That's what I am, and I've work on hand. I've been waiting for such a morning as this; and, now it has come, I intend to improve it. I shall want the horses an hour of two."

"You can have them. There's some teaming to be done, but there'll be time enough for it before this snow leaves us. It wont go to-day."

“There are no signs of it,” was the response. “This isn’t our last snow-storm either. There’s enough more to come down to fill feather beds for all the old women in the country.”

“Pretty cold beds.”

“But not cold coverlets. You remember that snow is a warm blanket.”

“Yes, I remember. But snow makes water, and that’s the most I care about.”

Harold Dorsey was waiting for Mr. Elliot ; and, as he sprang to his place on the sled, he said joyously, “I never was so happy in all my life before.”

“What has happened to you ?” asked his companion.

“I don’t really know. But the world’s all made over. I never saw it as it is this morning. It don’t seem but a little ways up to where God is ; and then, too, it seems as though he was right in my heart. Is he in yours, Mr. Elliot ?”

“No, Harold, he is not. Why should he be? You and I don’t think alike about such things, so we’d better not talk about them. I am glad if you are happy, and you certainly look so.”

“I *am* happy. I feel as though I belonged somewhere now. I wish grandsir was alive, so I could tell him.”

“If he had lived you might not have had any thing to tell. You would not be here.”

“I don’t suppose I should. But what made *you* come, Mr. Elliot?”

“*I* came because it was the best place for me; and *you* came because I was here; and you knew about me because, in my wanderings, I had stopped at your grandsir’s house, and he had learned to have some confidence in me, bad as I was. I should like to see the old place again. Shouldn’t you?”

“Yes, sir, indeed I should. I mean to go

there some time, but I don't care so much now where I am."

"Do Mr. and Mrs. Peavy know how happy you are this morning?"

"Yes, sir, I told them. I want to tell everybody; and I wish you were just as happy as I am."

"How did this great happiness come to you?" This question was asked in a tone intended to be sufficiently careless: yet the interest which had prompted it could not be concealed.

"I asked God to forgive all my sins, and make my heart pure and clean. I knew if he would only do that I should be happy."

"What sins have you ever committed, Harold? You've always done as well as you knew how. There's no sense in asking forgiveness when there's nothing to be forgiven."

"But sometimes I didn't know, and likely

I've done a good deal wrong without meaning to," was the young man's reply. "Then I didn't love God when I ought to. That made me feel so bad when I read all about him and his Son, that I cried a good deal; and I knew, any way, that my heart couldn't be all right."

"We're none of us perfect, and we can't expect to be," responded Mr. Elliot a little sharply, and then said, "This is a grand day for getting into the woods with a team, and our road isn't a bad one. Miss Austen and Mr. Stuart ought to take a look at this part of their property. Here we are; every thing all right just as we left it."

The snow was quickly shovelled away from the south side of the rude shanty, the sirup carefully loaded, and, long before they were expected back, Robert shouted that the "team was coming."

"Them two are always ahead of the

time," answered Mrs. Bumstead. "We'll have a busy day, and a rare one too. I'll just stand back, and see how it's done, but I'll be ready to lend a hand in case of need."

A rare day, indeed, it promised to be to all concerned. Jessie Elliot was invited up to "the party," as Robert styled the occasion; and, gladly responding to the call, she flitted from the piazza, where she watched the feeding of storm-driven birds, to the kitchen where the bubbling sirup was no less eagerly watched.

"This is the best sugar we shall make this year," said her father. "It will be very white, and well flavored too. We shall have another good run as soon as it comes off warm again, but the sap will not be so sweet, nor the sugar made from it so white."

"Why not, Mr. Elliot?"

"Because the buds will be further advanced, and the sap will be less pure."

This was a satisfactory explanation to one accustomed to observe the processes of nature with an intelligent eye, while it only roused the curiosity of the younger members of the company.

“Could anybody make sugar all the year round?” asked Jessie.

“Certainly not, child. After the first rise of the sap in the spring, there is only enough to provide for the regular growth of the tree.”

“But where does the sap come from, Mr. Elliot? Where is it before it goes up into the tree?”

“Whatever feeds the tree in spring must come from the ground. Later in the season, when the tree is growing vigorously, and it is covered with leaves, they absorb something from the air, the rain, and the dew.”

“But, father, there’s always sap in the tree in winter as well as summer. It fries

out of a green stick of wood when you put it in the stove. I don't suppose I've used the right word, but folks call it frying out," added Jessie, glancing at Miss Austen.

"I don't know what more fitting word could be used," responded the lady, smiling her approval.

Directly Robert asked, "What is it that goes up from the ground into the tree? Is it just the same for every tree?"

"Not exactly. All soils would not furnish exactly the same nourishment. But there must be water, and the water must be more or less impregnated with ammonia and carbonic acid. You find a different growth of trees on different soils. Pines will flourish where maples would hardly take root."

"Well, how is it, if almost the same thing is carried up to all the trees, that you can't make sugar from them all?"

"Perhaps, Robert, that's not a strange

question for you to ask," replied Mr. Elliot, with an amused smile. "I have heard of an old sailor who bought a country farm, and intending to carry on his farm in true landsman style, tapped about three hundred trees, and expected to make a large amount of sugar. He had a good opinion of his own ability, so he didn't trouble himself to ask anybody's advice. He tapped the trees just as they came, only looking out for the large ones ; and of course, when he came to boil down the sap, he didn't find himself very well supplied with sweetening."

"A man ought to know better than that," remarked Harold. "The sap of trees aint all alike. Some of it is sticky, and a good deal is bad tasting."

"Yes ; our sailor found that out to his sorrow, and got thoroughly laughed at for his pains. It seemed to the people round him just as it seems to you, that he ought to have

known better. But they had always lived among trees, while he had been on the sea most of his life. Put you on shipboard, and you would be as much out of place and as ignorant as he was."

"So I should, sir. I don't know but little about any thing, and I shouldn't said what I did."

"Yes, you should. You were all right. But you see none of us can know every thing. I know very little about trees myself, even such as I've seen all my life. I wish somebody would explain to me how the same material is worked up into such different substances."

"Why, father, God does it just as he's a mind to," responded Jessie confidently. "That's all there is to know, only Miss Austen says we can understand some of his ways."

Here the business of the hour demanded

immediate attention, and further discussion was postponed, much to the relief of Mr. Elliot, whose daughter had confronted him with the great truth he was so slow to accept. Moreover, as he afterwards laughingly acknowledged, he was "hard pushed by the questions of the youngsters." He knew at what time the largest flow of sap might be expected, and when it would be best to leave the trees to their own sweet will; but there were many processes he did not understand, perhaps past his finding out.

"Sure, you're always at something far off or hid away. I'm wondering what's the good," remarked Mrs. Bumstead good-naturedly. "You wouldn't be after making sugar in summer when there's no end of other work."

"I have seen sugar made in summer," replied Mr. Elliot.

"May be, but twasn't in such a country as this."

“It was very much such a country, and less than a hundred miles away. A man tapped a few trees in August, and made some sugar. He had heard that it could be done, so he tried the experiment. I suppose the secret of it is, that when the sap starts early in the spring, and the leaves get their full growth, and the new branches are solid and firm, so the tree is all ready for next year, there will be some surplus sap that can be taken away without injuring the tree. That is what is called August sap.”

“Well, I never! you’re just at the sap again,” said the smiling woman, who had prepared dinner for the entire company, and felt herself more than repaid for the extra work by a hearty appreciation of her efforts. “First it’s trees, and then it’s birds, and then it’s trees again. Would you mind telling me, an old woman, if you might make sugar from any other tree than maple?”

“Mother’s real happy to-day,” whispered Robert to Jessie by whom he was standing. “She’s just making fun now because we’ve asked so many questions.” The next moment his eyes opened wide at the answer she received.

“I have seen sugar that was made from the sap of a butternut tree.”

“Why, father!”

“That is true, strange as it may seem. There are a great many things for us all to learn.”

“So many! how can we ever learn?” sighed Jessie. “It’s just as Mrs. Bumstead says. First it’s one thing, and then it’s another. Now, I want to know all about sap. If it’s the same thing that goes up from the ground into all the trees, why don’t you get the same thing when you tap the trees? Seems to me, father, you might just tell us that.”

“That’s just what I want to know most of any thing,” added Robert.

“And I too,” rejoined Harold.

“I ought to be able to tell you about that; but the truth is, my knowledge of botany is not very extensive. Perhaps, though, I can help you a little. There are two kinds of sap, — the crude sap, and the true sap. The crude sap is what the roots take from the ground, and send up; or, rather, what is drawn up into the trunk and branches. At the start, it is just what the ground furnishes; but, as it goes along, it gets mixed with the old sap, and the substances composing the live wood, and takes from them the peculiar characteristics of the tree.”

“And what makes different kinds of trees, Mr. Elliot?”

“That I don’t know,” was the quick reply.

“There must be some cause in natural

selection, or there must be One whose ways no man can follow, and who orders all things according to the counsel of his own will."

This was said by Edward Stuart, whose presence had not been observed until he began to speak; and no one was more surprised than himself when answer was made, "I am more and more convinced of that every day of my life."





CHAPTER VIII.

THE PRINCE OF THE FAMILY.

MASON STUART was hurrying down the street, evidently forgetting his lameness, and yet limping awkwardly, when a familiar voice arrested his steps.

“Hold on there! you won’t gain time that way.”

The boy looked up into the face of Dr. Gray, and said courteously, “Good afternoon, sir.”

“Good afternoon. You are giving your ankle a hard try. Did you know that? You are not a steam-engine.”

“No, sir ; but I had on considerable steam when somebody whistled ‘Down brakes.’ ”

“And the doctor whistled. I suppose you lay that at my door.”

“Yes, sir : I was in a hurry to get home.”

“And this morning you were in a hurry to get to school.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Well, before you do much sleeping your ankle will probably remind you that it is not made of cast-iron. Be a little more careful of it, else you can’t walk twenty miles a day in your summer vacation, and climb all the mountains in sight of Austenville.”

“Yes, sir, thank you,” said Mason as he went on his way with slackened speed ; and yet his professional friend doubted his gratitude.

“That is the smartest boy in town,” remarked a gentleman. “He will eclipse his brothers, and come out ahead where they would make a dead failure.”

“ I’m not sure of that,” replied the doctor. “ I think I know the boy thoroughly, and I’m ready to indorse what you say of his smartness ; but his brothers will show themselves equal to the demands made upon them. Edward always ranked high as a scholar, and now bids fair to rank high among business men. There’s a good deal of their grandfather in those boys, and their father was a smart man too.”

“ I know it, but Mason is the prince of the family. Clarke is very popular, but for a hard pull, that young brother of his will beat him two to one. Mason’s heart is in the right place too. Perhaps you don’t know how benevolent he is. Yes, sir, he is right down benevolent in the best sense of that word. Just now he is trying to help Rufus Brown buy back Clover Top from his mother. Mrs. Brown was obliged to sell the cow ; and Mrs. Stuart bought her with

the understanding that she should go back when times improved. Mason came to me, and told me he wanted to earn some money ; and, when I asked him what in particular he wanted it for, he told me the whole story. So I engaged him to put ten cords of wood into my shed at fifty cents a cord."

"Well, Mr. Wilmarth, that was all right on your part, but Mason Stuart is doing all he ought to without taking any extra jobs. There are others who can help Mrs. Brown ; and I, for one, am willing to do it."

"So am I," responded Mr. Wilmarth. "Let us collect the price of the cow, and give it to Mason ; and, as no time is so good as the present, let us do it this evening."

Meanwhile, the boy whose character had been thus considered walked slowly until sure that he was beyond the observation of Dr. Gray, when he made such haste as he could. He carried a letter in his pocket,

which he was impatient to read ; and he hoped also to have some time for the work he had engaged to do. When he reached home, however, he found his sister Madge waiting for help which he could give her ; and this so delayed him that he was obliged to relinquish his plan.

“ Making maple sugar ! ” he exclaimed, after reading a page of his precious letter. “ I wish I had some this minute. It’s pretty hard on a fellow to stay here where there aint any thing of any account going on, when all the time there’s such a place as Austenville ready for him. Shouldn’t I like to be there ! They’ve sugared off once in the back kitchen. Just think of that, girls ! They had a talk about different kinds of sap too. Mr. Elliot knows almost every thing, I guess ; and, what he don’t know, Aunt Margaret of course does. Think of making maple sugar in August, and then

think of making sugar from butternut-trees any time. We might tap Aunt Margaret's big tree. Cousin Rachel wouldn't have any right to say we shouldn't, and I guess Dick would agree to it. This is a pretty short letter; but there's a good deal in it, and it's first-rate too."

"Perhaps you'll allow the rest of us to read it," said Madge.

"Yes, I'm willing you should. There aint any privacy in it. I hadn't any thing particular to consult Aunt Margaret about the last time I wrote to her."

As this was a characteristic speech, no notice was taken of it, and presently the appearance of Dick Fielding turned Mason's attention.

"Say, old fellow, what do you know about sugar-making?" he asked abruptly.

"Very little," was the reply.

"Well, they've got a man at Austenville

that knows all about it ; and they've got a sugar-grove, too, on the south side of a hill. I wonder how many kinds of trees there are that you can make sugar from. Do you know ? ”

“ No, I don't.”

“ Well, now, that's the same old story. I aint finding fault with you ; but I wish, when I ask people questions, they'd always know. If you're going to be a doctor, it's just in your line to study about trees and such things.”

“ Exactly, Mason ; and, whatever I may be, I am sufficiently interested in trees and such things, to make me wish to know all I can about them. But you are a famous fellow for asking questions, and taking people by surprise.”

“ I know it, Dick, and I don't doubt but what people get dreadful tired of me. But, you see, I'm taken by surprise myself, and

how am I to find out things if I don't ask questions? I know sugar is made from sugar-cane, and sorghum, and beets, but I don't suppose they are all the sugary vegetables there are."

"There are a great many others."

"Is there sugar in the sap of all trees?" now asked Mason eagerly, as the thought occurred to him for the first time.

"I think not," was replied. "Yet I am sure it occurs in a greater or less degree in many, and it is present in most vegetables."

"Well, it's strange, isn't it, how all these things are managed, and there don't seem to be any mistakes."

"If there were mistakes in nature, we should never feel sure of any thing. There would be no encouragement to study. But, in all the wonderful diversity of the different kingdoms, there is a systematic order

which never changes, so that by patient perseverance it is possible to fathom some of its mysteries."

"Well, now, Dick, that's a pretty grand speech for you to make. It sounds some like a college professor, and it's true every time. I used to think, when somebody told me any thing, I could know all about it without taking the trouble to think about it myself; but I've found out that I've got to put my mind to it any way. When I read 'Robinson Crusoe,' and 'Swiss Family Robinson,' I took it all for true; but since then it seems strange every thing should turn up in just the right time. If anybody was cast away on an island anywhere near the coast of New England, where the land wasn't cultivated, they wouldn't find much to live on."

"Not so much as there would be in a warmer climate; but, you remember, you thought there would be a *chance* even on a

bare rock in the ocean, and the land anywhere would give you more than that."

"Yes, I guess it would; but it might be hard living, for all that. Getting cast away wouldn't be so bad if you could find oranges and cocoanuts waiting for you, and all you have to do just pick them. Then I've read about the cow-tree. All you have to do to get milk from that, is just to make an incision, and take what comes. Tell you what, Dick, that's a good deal easier than feeding a live cow regularly, and milking twice a day."

"It certainly is; but, all things considered, I think you would prefer milking a cow, to occupying a hut at the foot of one of these wonderful trees. You would hardly be willing to exchange your quaint china bowl for a rough calabash."

"I guess I shouldn't. I don't mind wearing old clothes; they're a good deal more

comfortable than new ones ; but, when it comes to dishes and eating, I'm a dainty fellow. I wonder how people first found out what was fit to eat and drink. They know all about it now because things have been tried ; but I can't think how they were tried in the beginning. I remember reading, when I was a little fellow, that Gov. Winthrop put some strawberry leaves in a broth he made for Massasoit. Now, I should like to know what good there is in strawberry leaves, and what made him think of using them. Do you know ?'

"No, I don't: I never heard of it before."

"Well, I read it in an old history. Massasoit was sick, and I guessed there was some medicine in the leaves. Aunt Comfort says most every thing's good for something. You'd better study with her a while before you set up to be a doctor. She knows almost as much as that old root and herb

woman who comes round here once in a while; but I never thought much about it till lately. I mean to get Madge to keep a list of what can be made from the sap of trees. She can do it just as well as not. Clarke might, but I don't suppose he would; and, besides, I rather guess he's got enough else to think of this summer. He's going to be somebody yet, and I'm glad of it. I thought, one while, he cared more about fixing up and looking nice than any thing else; but since mother lost her money he's been getting more sensible."

"Clarke is a very fine fellow, Mason."

"Yes, I know it and I'm expecting a good deal of him now. But, you see, Ed's having the best chance of any of us. Tell you what, it's a big thing to live with Aunt Margaret, and have her to talk with any time you're a mind to. When I'm a man, I hope there'll be a girl something like her somewhere."

“You’re looking a good ways ahead.”

“That’s the way to do. That’s what keeps a fellow hard at work when he feels awful lazy. It’s like a whip held over his back, and I guess most folks need it.”

“Do you ever feel lazy?”

“I guess I do. If anybody wanted to lie abed in the morning more than I did last winter, I’m sorry for him.”

“Then towards the last of the winter you took that cow to make more work.”

“Yes; and I’m glad I did, though we aint going to keep her much longer. When grass grows, Mrs. Brown can afford to take her back, and she’ll do it. I’ve been looking ahead to that this good while.”

This very looking ahead was one of the marked traits of Mason Stuart’s character. He had a habit of reasoning from cause to effect; and, although he was sometimes impatient of results, he was nevertheless a

persistent worker, depending entirely upon himself whenever this was possible.

Later in the evening, when he had mastered his Latin lesson, and was counting upon a good hour for reading, Mr. Wilmarth surprised him by calling, and placing in his hands the full amount which had been paid for Clover Top.

“Now I suppose you’ll be glad to throw up the job you engaged to do for me,” remarked the gentleman. “The doctor says you have enough on your hands without that; and I can find somebody else to pile wood.”

“Yes, sir. Thank you,” was the reply. “But I don’t understand it. How came you to think of it?”

“Dr. Gray thought of it. The credit of it belongs to him.”

“Well, I suppose it’s all right, though I don’t know what Rufe will say to it. Any

way, I'm much obliged to you, and to every one that gave the money. But, Mr. Wilmarth, can't you let Rufe have the job? He'll manage it somehow, and he'll be glad of the pay."

"Yes, Rufus can do it. I would as soon pay him as anybody, and you can have your time for something else."

This conversation had taken place at the street-door; and it was all such a surprise to the boy, that he quite forgot to invite his friend to enter the house. The gentleman was gone, and he was left to tell the story to his mother as best he might. Then he must needs see Mrs. Brown before he slept; while it was no less necessary for him to consult Rufus.

The latter was unwilling to accept the gift thus bestowed; but some earnest words of persuasion at length removed his objections, and he said heartily, "I am just as

thankful as I can be. We shall get along first rate now ; and perhaps, if I work hard this summer, I can go to school another winter. I want to."

"You ought to go. Such a tip-top scholar as you are never ought to settle down to hard work without having time to study. The work part is all right ; but, you see, there can't anybody very well do two things at once. You're keeping up well though. Want any help about the lessons ? "

"Not yet. I keep thinking every day I shall, but I've got along so far."

"Good ! I'm glad of it. Hope you'll come out the best scholar in school, and make one of the smartest men in the country. You can, just as well as not, if you only make up your mind. After all, as Aunt Margaret says, it's only doing one day's work at a time, and doing that just as well as you can.

But I'll tell you what the trouble is. A fellow gets his ideas waked up about something, and he thinks he'll go at it with all his might, and learn just what he wants to know. He's in dead earnest a little while, but you see he don't stick to it. He'll lie abed too late in the morning, or he'll go lazing round when he ought to be studying, or else he'll pitch in and play twice as long as he meant to, and forget all about what he'd started for. I tell you, too, it's pretty hard on a fellow when he finds he's got to live on the square right along, if he's ever going to make his mark in the world. But for all that, Rufe, I'm bound to try it; and you're as good for it as I am, though you've got more to do to begin. You can count on me for just all the help I can give you; and I shouldn't wonder if I come round to Mr. Wilmarth sometimes when you're tumbling over that wood."



CHAPTER IX.

TREES AND THEIR SAP.

COME, Madge, you'd better commence that sap list," said Mason Stuart to his sister, when a heavy rain made it almost certain that they must depend upon themselves for their evening's entertainment. "This is just the right time for hunting up things. I've studied like a trooper all day on purpose to gain time. Clarke'll be along pretty soon, and we'll get what we can out of him. We'll press the whole family into service. I wish Aunt Margaret was here. She knows more than all the rest of us, but we'll do the best we can."

"I know one thing that's made out of sap," responded Hester eagerly. "The teacher told us all about it the other day. It's India-rubber. It's got another awful hard name, but I shant try to speak it. I can write it though."

She took the slate, and wrote plainly, "Caoutchouc." Then she proceeded to give a description of the manner in which the milky sap is procured and prepared for use, adding, "It aint a bit nice work. I shouldn't want to do it; but then I don't know how we could do without rubbers."

"We could do the same as people used to do in old times. As for the work, I would sooner go into the woods, and tap trees, than pick up bugs and beetles and all sorts of crawling things."

"So should I," chimed in Madge. "But Hester has done well to remember so much of what she was told. There are several

kinds of trees that have a milky sap which hardens into elastic gum. I have read about them."

"So have I, but I couldn't have told half as much about them as Hester did," said Mason; thus making amends for his disparaging remarks in regard to her favorite employment. "We'll put rubber first on the list, and give her credit for it."

"But why not commence nearer home? Put it after maple sugar; and the next thing I think of is turpentine. Then there's pitch: that's something like it."

"Oh, yes! that's a bright thought of yours, Madge. I've read about the turpentine forests. The men who go to work there chip a piece out of a tree at just the right time; and the first sap that runs is the clearest, and brings the highest price. Then there's a good deal that's dirty and darker, that they have to get rid of the best way they can.

But that's only the beginning of these things. I took some notes when I read about it, and that makes me remember. The turpentine is refined into *oil* of turpentine ; then that is distilled, and makes *spirits* of turpentine ; and what is left is resin. Then they burn up all the refuse stuff, and that makes tar, unless they want lamp-black instead of it. If they do, they have to burn it so they can save all the smoke. Now I've told all I know about that. I wish Dick was here. We'd find out what he knows. If it didn't rain so hard I'd go after him."

"He may come back with Clarke," said Mrs. Stuart.

"Nobody knows when Clarke will come back, if he once gets where Nellie is. He'll be sure to stay as long as he can, and she'll be willing to keep him ; and I don't blame either of them. Nellie's a tip-top girl, and I don't wonder she likes to have all the

pleasant folks round her she can get. Clarke don't scold nor fret, only at me once in a while, and he's getting over that. He's improving."

"Mason!"

"Yes, mother. I didn't speak against any one."

"I know, my son, but implications are always ungenerous. I think you may expect Clarke soon. I sent a message by him to his aunt, and he knows that I am waiting for a reply. There he is now just unlatching the gate."

"He aint talking with anybody," remarked Lilla in a tone of disappointment.

"Halloo! It's you, isn't it?" shouted Mason, as he recognized his cousin's step in the hall. "You're the very fellow we wanted to see. Where's Clarke?"

"I left him with mother and the girls. They were willing to make an exchange for

the evening, and I was willing to be exchanged."

"Good! Now just sit down, and tell us all you know. We're at our sap list; and we've got as far as maple sugar, India-rubber, and turpentine. Hester has told us all about India-rubber. We know that turpentine comes from pine trees, and I guess we don't care much more about it, because it's no use spending too much time on one thing. We can't afford it. If you've got any message for mother, you can deliver it, and then we'll proceed to business. We want you to tell us what kind of trees are of the greatest value to the world."

"Well, Mason Stuart, I call that wandering a good ways from our subject, and I think you are the very strangest boy I ever knew," exclaimed Madge. "You said we would talk about sap this evening."

"I know it, and we're going to. But, you

see, I thought we'd get all we could out of Dick."

"You are welcome to do so," responded the cousin, who had already found an opportunity to say what he wished to his aunt. "The sap is the life of a tree, as the blood is the life of our bodies. But, to answer your question: trees belonging to the order *coniferæ* are of the greatest value to the world. I have been studying them up a little, and find them of more importance than I thought."

"Then go ahead. I suppose '*coniferæ*' means trees that bear cones."

"Yes, it does; and some variety of these trees is found nearer to the poles than any other. There are pines, cedars, firs, and larches to begin with. The cedars of Lebanon, those grand old trees famous in Solomon's time, belong to this order. Then the sequoias on the Pacific coast, growing to be

of such enormous size, that, when I read about them, I think they were created for a race of giants. Pine trees are fruit trees, too, although they are not usually considered such."

"I should think not, and I'm sure our pines don't bear any fruit. They have cones, but the cones are not eatable."

"No, but the seeds may be. Did you ever see a pine-seed?"

"No: I never thought of looking for it," answered Mason. "Did you, Madge?"

"No, but I wonder I haven't. I should like to see one. There are some cones in the shed, and I suppose the seeds are in the cones. Rufus Brown brought us the cones to kindle fires with. They are so full of pitch they burn in a minute. Now we are so far off the track we started on, we may as well study pine-cones as any thing else."

The cones were brought, and some of the

scales removed, thus revealing the winged seeds which were immediately tasted.

“They aint a bit good,” said Lilla, who, while talking little, was wont to push her inquiries by actual experiment. “I don’t know but the birds could eat them, they eat such queer things, but I couldn’t if I was ever so hungry.”

“Perhaps you could, little cousin. Hunger will drive one to eat some things that are not palatable, and a great many people have managed to live on more repulsive food than pine-seeds. But our pines are very poor specimens of their family. There is a variety called the sugar-pine, which grows on the Pacific coast, and is in every respect a magnificent tree. It yields a white, transparent, resinous sap, that in its crude state tastes of turpentine; but when the tree is partially burned it loses most of that, and becomes nearly as sweet as sugar. It is

sometimes used for sweetening, instead of sugar."

"I shouldn't think it would be very good," remarked Madge.

"Not so good for food as for medicine; but it gives a name to the tree, and furnishes a cheap medicine to the frontier people."

"Well, Dick, I'm glad you came instead of Clarke. Madge, you can put down the sugar-pine beside the sugar-maple. There's one thing I've learned this evening."

"But you have not learned all about this sugar-pine. It's greatest value is for lumber. It furnishes the best lumber for finishing purposes that is found in California; and it grows to so great a size, that sticks can sometimes be cut from it a yard square and a hundred feet long. A forest of such trees is a lumberman's paradise; but there are others quite as remarkable."

“Then tell us about them.”

“There is one remarkable for its bark. This is like cork, and is arranged in plates which give the trees a very strange appearance. If you could see them, Madge, you would have an excellent opportunity to study the habits of woodpeckers. They use the bark of these trees for storehouses or plantations. I don’t know which is the most appropriate name; but they pack the bark with acorns, and then leave them till the grubs are hatched that they counted on. They prepare a dainty dish for themselves.”

“I wonder what kind of grubs they are,” said Hester. “I mean to fasten up an acorn somewhere, and see. It is pretty bright in the woodpeckers to look out that way.”

“Birds are knowing creatures,” responded Madge. “The more I learn about them, the more it seems to me that they can think and reason. I should like to see a woodpecker

setting up his acorns. I presume he works with a will, and I know he can strike a smart blow."

"Yes, indeed. Don't you remember what a loud noise the one made that we heard in the woods last spring? He was whacking away at a tree that looked as sound as any; but I've noticed lots of holes in old dead trees, where I suppose woodpeckers had been hunting after insects. Do you suppose they ever make any mistakes, Dick, and get their labor for their pains?"

"I don't know, but I should think not. Instinct is a sure guide for all unreasoning creatures; and, as Madge says, it does seem sometimes as though birds could reason. Anyway, they know where to look for the seeds of pines, and they are sure to select the best ones. The sugar-pine has seeds as large as apple-seeds, and the birds live upon them."

“ Whew ! I should like to see them ; but then, come to think of it, that aint very large after all.”

“ Not very ; but there are nut-pines with enormous cones, and seeds as large as beans. The Indians lay up stores of these seeds for their winter food, and would find it hard to live without them.”

“ Are you sure of all that, Dick ? ”

“ I am sure that I have good authority for it, and it seems to me perfectly reasonable. We must, of course, accept the testimony of others. No one person can examine the flora of the whole world.”

“ ‘ Flora ’ is a new word. What does it mean, Cousin Dick ? ”

“ It means all the trees and plants, and every thing that grows out of the ground. So, you see, the most learned botanist knows comparatively little from his own observation. Some countries are richer in floral wonders

than others. A tropical forest seems to me the most attractive place in the world."

"I don't know about that. There's got to be a good deal of hard work done before anybody can get through it. I've read about vines that grow tighter and tighter round the trees till they just hug them to death. Then there are lots of things that don't seem to have any roots anywhere. They just hang on to something, and grow right along. But then there are splendid flowers there, and flocks of birds as bright and beautiful as flowers."

"Yes, and hosts of insects, with creeping, slimy creatures without number," added Madge. "They would drive me crazy, but it would be a paradise for Hester."

"I should like to see them all, but I should want Mason to go with me, and take care of me," said the younger sister.

"I'll do it," was heartily responded.

“But we’re getting off the track. Sap is the subject under discussion. Have you finished the coniferæ? That’s the word, isn’t it?”

“Exactly. That’s what comes of your studying Latin. Some one told me to-day that you have the most perfect recitations in your class, and I was very glad to hear it. We all rather expected you would fail in that.”

“I knew you did, and it’s been a hard job for me not to. But I said I’d learn the outlandish stuff, and I will. I’m not going to be behind the rest, as long as I’ve got will enough to keep my head at work.”

“Good for you, Mason! I guess Aunt Margaret has something to do with your decision.”

“I guess she has too. I aint ashamed to own it either. She knows Latin like a book. But I guess we’ve said enough about that.

I want Madge to add something more to her list this evening."

"Dick may have something more to tell us about coniferæ."

"I've not much more well arranged in my mind, although I could talk longer about cone-bearing trees. The juniper and the yew belong to this order; and the fruit of the juniper is used in some places in the manufacture of gin. The cypress grows in our southern swamps, and the roots have large excrescences growing on them, something like those on our pines, only they are much larger. The cypress is considered an appropriate tree for cemeteries, but its wood is very valuable. There is another tree belonging to the same order, growing in Mauritania, which produces enormous knots at the foot of the trunk, and the wood of these is what the ancient Romans called citron-wood. Tables made of it were sold for their weight in gold."

“And is that tree a cousin to our pines?” asked Mason.

“Yes, a cousin, although not a first cousin. It is a distant relative; one of the nobility of the family, having the marked family traits.”

“One of the moneyed aristocracy, you mean, don’t you, Dick? I don’t believe it’s as grand a tree, after all, as some in our country.”

“Perhaps not. Our trees are something to be proud of. But to return to sap. I suppose you know that many of the paints and pigments in use are prepared from the sap of trees and plants. Dyes, for the most part, are made from different kinds of wood, but it is the sap which gives color to the wood.”

“Do you know what the otter Aunt Comfort likes to color with so much is made from?” asked Lilla. “It aint otter either.

I haint spoke the word right, though it's just as Aunt Comfort says it. What is it, Madge?"

"Annotto."

"That, I believe, is made from the seeds of a tropical tree. But some way I have lost part of my story about pines as fruit-trees, and you must let me go back a little. On the shores of the Mediterranean there is a pine which produces edible seeds, and also in Siberia. Then, if you would rate all such trees at their full value, you must remember that they furnish the best of lumber, and a resinous sap which is used for a great variety of purposes. Capt. Cook cured his sailors of scurvy with a drink prepared from the sap of a New Zealand tree; and there is another tree on the island where the resin exudes from the trunk, and is found in half fossilized blocks. Amber is a fossil resin, and petroleum must have the same origin as amber."

“O Cousin Dick, do tell us more about amber!” now exclaimed Hester. “I read, the other day, about a little girl that had a present of some amber beads, and one of them had a beetle in it all perfect. How could it come there? The amber is hard, isn’t it?”

“Yes, or it couldn’t be made into beads; and there is only one way the beetle could get into it.”

“How is that? Was it ever any thing like pitch?”

“It was at first. People know now, as certainly as any such thing can be known, that it is the resin of a species of pine. When it was flowing from a tree, a fly or a beetle might get stuck fast in it, and soon be entirely covered. Then, after a time, the resin would harden, and by and by a little girl find a beetle in one of her amber beads. Amber is so hard that it can be polished like

the precious stones, and this brings out its beauties. It is very rough in its natural state, so that, unless a person is accustomed to it, he would never suspect what it is. Sometimes there are tiny shells in it, and I have read of butterflies being found."

"Oh! I wish I had one. It would be a great deal handsomer than any of mine, I know."

"You shall have one when I grow up, if there's one to be bought," replied Mason confidently. "You ought to have one, Hester, and you shall."

"But perhaps it will cost too much money," said the child, who had been learning some lessons of economy during the last few months.

"I can earn it," was her brother's response. "Don't you worry about that. Now what I want to know is, if amber is all the time being made."

“Not true amber. The trees which produced it are extinct; but there is a resin very much like it that has sometimes deceived people who think they know all about it. Amber burns in a manner peculiar to itself, and I believe this is considered a sure test of its being genuine.”

“I wish we had some here, so we could examine it. Is there any in our country?”

“I think there is.”

“But how came there to be so much in the ground? Who tapped the trees, and then let the sap all run away?”

“Good for you, Lilla! I’m glad you asked that question. You always go to the root of things. Let’s hear all about it, Dick.”

“The trees were not tapped. They grew until they were ready to fall from old age or some other cause; and then as the wood decayed, perhaps from thousands of trees, the resin would accumulate in large quanti-

ties. Then the land might be covered with water, and so in time pieces be washed up on the shore of seas and lakes."

"That's one side of the story. But, if it's true that it accumulated in large quantities, why isn't it found in beds the same as coal is?"

"There are beds of what is called amber earth, that has pieces of amber scattered through it."

"How large are the pieces?"

"They are generally small. Sometimes, though, they weigh half a pound, and occasionally more. Besides being beautiful for ornaments, amber reveals to the geologist something of the history of the world, so that it has a double value."

"Well, this is all new to me, Dick, and I must say you've improved in your way of talking since last winter. You told us something about pine-trees then, but not

half as much as you have now. I never thought much about amber, any way, but after this I shall be on the lookout for more light."

"I am glad I have interested you, Mason," replied Dick Fielding. "I am glad, too, that you think I have improved. Perhaps I ought to tell you further about amber, that in ancient times it was regarded with a kind of superstitious reverence. When heated or pounded it gives out a subtle fragrance. Then it has certain electrical qualities; and these, with its odor, are calculated to excite the wonder of ignorant people."

"I should think so. There are hosts of wonderful things in the world; but the strangest of all is, that every thing is planned to last so long in one shape or another, and that after all somebody gets the benefit of it. It seems as though the whole world was just a great workshop."

“It is.”

“And who is the foreman?” asked Madge lightly.

“God is, and I shouldn’t think you’d speak that way,” responded Lilla reverently.

“He knows every thing, and he has all the work done just as he says.”

The faith so simply announced by Lilla Stuart was as spontaneous as the love out-flowing to her mother. The sweet trust and confidence grew and strengthened all unconsciously.





CHAPTER X.

THE HIDDEN WATERFALL.

THE conviction that there is One who orders all things after the counsel of his own will was gradually accepted by Richmond Elliot; but it brought to him no happiness. Strange that living so with nature, in its varied moods, he had failed to recognize the unseen hand, which, while moulding a grain upon the sea-shore, holds the planets to their course. He saw it now, and the sight inspired him with terror. He who had faced poverty and wretchedness, asking neither sympathy nor assistance; who had trodden the downward path, and, know-

ing whither his steps were tending, had defied his fate, — now trembled at the thought of God.

The snow which had sent him from the sugar-camp prevented his return until after the sabbath; and he had just risen from the breakfast table when Jessie said, “Now, father, you must go to meeting this evening; and Miss Austen said last Sunday she wanted everybody to say something besides a verse this time. You will, won’t you?”

“What shall I say?” he asked.

“Something good,” was his daughter’s reply. “Most everybody that talked last Sunday said they loved Jesus, or else they wanted to be Christians.”

“What did you say, Jessie?”

“I said I loved Jesus, and I wanted to be good, so I could live with him and mother in heaven. You want to live there too, don’t you, father? Mother’ll miss you if you

aint there," and the child turned a pleading face to her father.

"She must be glad to miss me," was the rejoinder made in a husky voice.

"Why, father! how can you say that? Mother asked God to forgive your sins, and let you come and live with her. Don't you want to go?"

The man thus addressed gave no sign that he had heard the searching question. His face, clear cut, with a wild, haggard look, might have been carved in stone for all of life it manifested. With a sigh Jessie left him, and went quietly to her work, while he rushed from the house.

Once outside, a neighbor accosted him, and claimed his attention until he had regained his self-control. He wished he could spend the day alone upon the hillside; but, as this could not be, he resolved to keep sternly silent, and so avoid any further

reminder of his duty. As he entered the kitchen, his little daughter looked up from her book, but, receiving no encouragement to speak, continued her reading. Later, they saw the family from the mansion-house driving down the avenue; Mr. Bumstead himself holding the reins, and seeming well pleased with his position.

“There’s room for you with the rest, and you shall go next sabbath if we can find a woman to do the necessary sewing to get you ready.”

“O father! may I go?” exclaimed Jessie in response to his words. “I sha’n’t mind much about my clothes, only I shouldn’t like to have Miss Austen ashamed of me. I shouldn’t like to have her think I didn’t look nice enough.”

“Neither should I like to have her think so; and there is no need of my daughter’s looking shabby.”

This closed the conversation, and the day wore on a little wearily. The warmth of the sun changed the entire appearance of the landscape. Where had been banks of snow, the water stood in pools, and at evening the walking was far from good.

Nevertheless, the hall was well filled with an attentive audience. Edward Stuart read a chapter from the Bible without comment; then a hymn, in the singing of which many joined. Mr. Gleason offered a fervent prayer, and another hymn was sung. At its close all waited expectantly; when Miss Austen repeated a passage which had been read, and in a few simple sentences enforced the doctrine taught.

Many were moved, yet it was easy to see that they still waited for others before expressing their own feelings; and not one in the room but knew who of all could exert the strongest influence. If religion

was the crowning glory of life, why should not Mr. Stuart acknowledge its power, and seek it for himself?

He felt the unspoken thoughts of those about him, and rising, at length, testified to his reverence for holy things, and his desire to live as God would have him. He did not talk of his sins, or express regret for the past. On the contrary, his whole soul seemed absorbed in contemplating the matchless power and goodness of the Almighty Father.

Harold Dorsey next arose, and told of the strange happiness which had come to him, his beaming face far more eloquent than his broken words. In closing, he said, "You see, I didn't know much about God till after I came here. If I had, I should have prayed to him a great while ago. I've always wanted to find somebody to help me that knew every thing. At first, God seemed a

great ways off, and I thought it couldn't be he loved me. But now I know he does. I know he does, and I'm so happy! I want you all to love him too. How can you help it?"

One and another responded to this simple appeal, while Richmond Elliot sat with bowed head. His heart was full of hatred. At that moment he would have dethroned the Sovereign of the world, and experienced a savage joy that he was freed from all responsibility. He had been silent even when others were singing, but the jubilant strains of "Coronation" could not be resisted.

"I wish I had something of your faith. I believe there is a God, but to me he is only an avenging judge. I have no love for him."

He had not intended to speak. He wondered at himself, and felt keenly the rebuke,

when Harold Dorsey said with pathetic earnestness, "O Mr. Elliot! the reason you don't love God is because you don't know about him."

A hush followed this remark, broken at last by the voice of prayer. Then, as the meeting was about to close, Richmond Elliot went forward where he could be seen by every person in the hall, and acknowledged that his scepticism and irreligion had been all wrong. No one should look to him for an example of consistent living. He was trying to do better than he had done in previous years, but his heart was not right. He hoped he should attain to greater purity in the future, and begged that he might not be a stumbling-block in the way of others.

Jessie almost held her breath as she listened; trembling, and yet rejoicing. She hastened home, and, when her father joined

her, she comprehended at once that it was no time to speak of what had transpired. The next morning she carefully refrained from any allusion to the events of the evening, and was left alone with all her thoughts unexpressed.

The weather was much warmer; and her father went to the sugar-camp, where he was met by Harold, who gave him a hearty greeting.

“What new discovery have you made this morning?” he asked, in order to forestall any questions or comments which might be unwelcome.

“I’ve not made much of a discovery,” was replied; and the most casual observer would have detected the disappointment there was no effort to conceal. Yet soon after Harold said pleasantly, “I came across a place where a flock of little birds had roosted through the storm.”

“Where was it?”

“On the lowest branches of a spruce-tree; so near to the ground, and so well sheltered, that the wind couldn’t touch them, nor the hawks either. The checker-berry leaves round there were all notched where the birds had picked them, but I don’t think they generally eat such leaves. They must have been hungry, poor little things! I pity any thing that is hungry.”

“Were you ever really hungry, yourself?”

“Yes, I have been. I got lost once in the woods, and wandered round till I was very hungry.”

“I don’t see why you should do that. Anybody as well used to the woods as you are ought to be able to find something to eat. I hardly ever saw the time when I couldn’t.”

“But I was only ten years old then, and I was so anxious to find my way out that I

forgot about eating, till it was so dark I couldn't go any farther. Then I broke down some hemlock-boughs, and made a bed, and went to sleep."

"You were not afraid."

"No, not after I'd made up my mind that I'd got to stay out all night. Grandsir didn't allow me to be afraid of any thing only disobeying him. If I'd only known about God then, I should felt a good deal better ; but I slept, and, when I waked in the morning, I saw the twin trees, and knew where I was."

"What were the twin trees ?"

"Two maples, fastened together by a branch that looked like a round bar. They were just of a size, and the tops were just the same shape. When I saw them, that morning, I was so glad I cried. I was only about a mile from home, and, if I had kept on a little while longer, I should have been all right."

“Why didn’t you climb a tree, and see where the sun was?”

“Because I didn’t know about it; and, if I had, perhaps I couldn’t have told the way any better. Grandsir didn’t expect me to get lost, so he hadn’t told me what to do.”

“Did he tell you after that?”

“Yes, sir; but he blamed me for not knowing without being told; and he didn’t give me any thing to eat till dinner-time. Oh! I wanted a mother then, and I’ve wanted one ever since.”

“Mrs. Peavy is a good mother to you now?”

“Yes, sir; but I don’t think my own mother was much like her. I should like a mother like Miss Austen.”

“I wish you had such a woman for your mother, Harold; but, as you haven’t, it is a great blessing to have her for a friend.”

“I know it is; and I’ve so many friends, it

makes me glad. I didn't know how it would seem to have so many. I think I'm just beginning to live."

"You have lived sixteen years."

"In one way I have, Mr. Elliot; but think how different it was from the way most boys live. Never to read the Bible, and never to love God, or really know any thing about him. I don't call that half living; do you?"

"That's the way I've lived, Harold."

"Well, I wonder at you. Why, I used to think you knew most every thing. Grand-sir said you was a good scholar. You used to talk about things I didn't understand."

"Yes, your grandsir was a very fine scholar. He must some time have lived differently from what he did when I knew him."

"I guess he did, but I can't understand what made him do so. I wish I did;" and

a perplexed, troubled look stole over the face of the speaker. "After all, it don't make much difference to me now," he added with a sigh of relief. "I've started right at last."

"I believe you have, Harold, and I am very glad. Now let us start our day's work. We'll see that the buckets are all right; and then we'll sit by the fire, and make ourselves comfortable. Did you bring a book with you?"

"No, sir; I don't think the working hours belong to me, and, if I had a book, I might keep at it too long. I study every night, and yesterday I read a good deal when I was at home."

"Did you go to church?"

"Yes, sir; but I didn't like it as well as I do our own meeting."

Mr. Elliot was gone before his question was answered; and soon he was separated from his young friend by quite a long dis-

tance. It was no easy task to make one's way through the soft snow, yielding as it did at every step ; but each tree was visited, while the consequent fatigue forbade all thought of other interests. When they met again it was nearly noon.

“ Most time for pork and potatoes,” said the master of ceremonies. “ We may as well have dinner in good season. We shall have a big run of sap this afternoon. I'll make the coffee, and stow away the potatoes, and you can broil the pork. You do that better than I can, and I want a good dinner to-day. Our tin plates, and knives and forks, will come in use ; and I shouldn't wonder if we had company to eat with us. Robert talked of coming, and I told him if he did to bring some dishes with him. There he is. I can hear his whistle. — Halloo ! ”

Another halloo was heard in response, and

presently Robert Bumstead appeared shouting at the top of his voice, —

“I hope you are glad to see me, Harold.”

“I am. You are very welcome, and in time for dinner.”

“I thought I should be, though I stopped on the way. Come through the woods, every step from the corner, and kept my eyes open to see what I could see. I put my ear down to the ground, one place I thought I could hear water running; and I could hear it plain, just like a little waterfall. It was right under an old stump, and I staid there ever so long. So if anybody wants to find a new supply of water, there’s a chance. I tracked it a few rods, and then lost it: so it must be that it goes down deeper in the ground.”

“Why, Mr. Elliot, aint the ground solid?”

“Think a minute, Harold, and you can answer your own question. I remember,

not far from your old home, quite a stream of water that disappeared between two rocks which had evidently once belonged together. Somewhere, there must have been an underground lake or pond, and I presume there are more such bodies of water than we imagine. When a ledge is opened, large fissures are often found filled with water; and often, too, this water acts as an explosive force, rending the rock asunder."

"How can it?"

"By freezing. You know that water expands in freezing, and in order to make room for it the solid rock must give way. It takes severe weather to do this unless the water is near the surface; but in a hundred years there's a good deal of this kind of work done. Nature's workmen never rest from their labors. Changes are constantly going on around us. Creation is not yet accomplished."

“Then you don’t believe that every thing was created in the beginning just as it is now.”

“Of course I don’t. I know it was not. Take a piece of waste land anywhere, and see how it will change in ten years, even if no human being sets a foot upon it. Birds will fly over it, leaving here and there a seed gathered perhaps miles away ; and some one of these seeds, if not more, will germinate, so giving a new growth. Then the wind will bring the winged seeds of trees, and some animal may choose to make his winter storehouse in your waste piece of land ; and some rejected nut throw out a footstalk that will fasten it securely, and draw up the nourishment necessary for the growth of a tree. The wind, too, may make a drift of sand, while there may be stones gradually pulverizing to give a new element to the soil.”

“But, Mr. Elliot, all that wouldn’t make any great difference, so but what you’d know the place well enough. There’d be some little trees started, and some mole-hills, perhaps, but they wouldn’t amount to much.”

“Perhaps not; but multiply the change by ten, twenty, or a hundred, and then see what you would have. By that time trees would fall and decay; moss and vines would grow over them; and it might be that other vigorous trees would take root where these had fallen.”

“I suppose all that might be, but the hills stand all the same.”

“A continual dropping will wear a stone, and exposure to the elements tells even upon the hardest granite. Land-slides occur which entirely change the face of a hill or mountain; and not a shower falls without making some impression. Look through the

woods here. The roots of the trees hold the soil pretty firmly, but some is washed away every year. Dead leaves and branches accumulate until in some places hollows are filled up, and in others hillocks are formed. You will recognize the hill in fifty years from this time, if you should see it then, but it will not look just as it does now."

"I know it wouldn't, now I think of it, but I didn't think before. Mother says a rubbish-heap grows faster than any thing else, and I suppose it grows as fast in the woods as anywhere else. There's always something coming to it, and seeds fly with the wind."

"That's true," said Harold. "And then there's another thing. All the rivers and brooks carry dirt from one place to another. A piece of the bank will crumble off, and some of it sink straight to the bottom, but it don't all sink. I've seen, at

home, where it lodged against an old stump till it turned the course of the brook. There was just as much water: so it had to run on the other side, and take off a piece of that bank. Grandsir told me that the ocean does the same thing, only on a larger scale. He said the waves bring a great deal to the land, and take away a great deal; and sometimes they take from one country and give to another."

"Yes, the ocean is constantly changing the outline of continents and islands; and that is what I mean by saying that the work of creation is still going on."

"But, Mr. Elliot, to create means to make something out of nothing; and all the water in the world couldn't do that, could it?"

"No, I don't suppose it could," was replied hesitatingly by the man who was thus again confronted with an unwelcome truth.

“The material is all second-hand, Mr. Elliot. God made it in the first place.”

“It must be he did, Harold. Some time we will talk more about this. One word leads to a great many.”

“So it does,” rejoined Robert. “Who would have thought that my stopping to listen to the water under ground would have started us off on such a track? Every thing leads to something else; and when you begin to think, and ask questions, there don’t seem to be any end. But what a grand place this is any way! I want to go all round. I want to see the mother-tree Jessie told me about, and get some lichen for Miss Austen. She wants some. I don’t know as I can find any berries, can I?”

“Not many, I guess. The birds have been picking berries since Jessie was here.”

“But the snow covered them.”

“And the birds know how to uncover

them. I saw a flock of birds, yesterday, scratching like chickens; and they must have known what they were about, for they were at a spot where some short grass had gone to seed. I went to it after they'd gone, and it was a good feeding ground for them."

"I didn't know birds ever scratched that way."

"I didn't either. I never noticed them scratching before. But I've been careless. I didn't half see what I was looking at; and I guess that's the difference in folks about learning."

"That is just the difference, boys. It pays to cultivate habits of close observation, and to have your thoughts well defined. Careless seeing and careless thinking usually go together."



CHAPTER XI.

OUT OF DOORS.

CONVERSATION drifted to more personal subjects; dinner was prepared and eaten, after which the boys went away by themselves, talking earnestly as they walked, or lingered by some object of interest.

“Aint Mr. Elliot ever so different from what he used to be?” at length asked Robert.

“Yes, else he wouldn’t said what he did last night at the meeting. It’s strange, when he knows so much, he shouldn’t know about the Bible. He don’t ever read it unless he

does lately. I think it's a grand book; don't you, Robert?"

"Yes, though I've only just begun to read it much."

"Why, didn't your father and mother want you to?"

"They didn't care, I think. They didn't read it, so I didn't. Where we lived, folks didn't go to church much, and we didn't go at all. Mother and I used to go into the woods sometimes, Sunday, and she let me look round while she rested. She always heard me read more Sunday; but father didn't make any difference between that and other days. He has changed too: we have all changed;" and, lifting his cap, he threaded his fingers through a mass of wavy hair. "The mill hands know it, and mother says it's going to be the making of Austenville. She says Miss Austen and Mr. Stuart wouldn't be like what they are if they wa'n't Christians."

“That’s what Mr. and Mrs. Peavy say ; and I think it’s being Christians makes them so good.”

“Likely it is, Harold ; but it’s not that makes the mistress know so much. He that used to be master here knew just the same, only about God. He didn’t mind Sundays, but he minded other things. Say, Harold, are you a Christian ?”

“Yes, if I know what it means to be a Christian. Mr. Peavy says it’s loving God and the Saviour, and trying to do right. It’s something more, too, but I can’t explain it. There’s having your heart changed so every thing seems different from what it did before ; and that’s the way ’tis with me.”

“Are you sure ?”

“Yes, sure ;” and the lips which uttered these words were wreathed with smiles. “There’s something in my heart now, like the song of a bird when the sun shines out after a storm.”

"I'm glad for you, Harold. I wish I felt so, but I don't, though I'm trying to do right. We aint alike."

"No, you're better off than I be. You've had a great deal different home, and you've had a chance to study when I hadn't. I've lived most out doors."

"And didn't you like it?"

"I didn't know any other way. Grandsir went with me part of the time; but he didn't talk much, only to tell me what he wanted me to do. When I went alone I used to watch every thing I saw moving, and that made me know better how to catch them. That was what I wanted to know."

"I suppose so, but it seems almost wicked to take advantage of the poor things when they can't help themselves."

"I don't think it was, because that was our way of living. Grandsir sold the pelts, and bought what we needed; and I never

caught even a fish, unless we wanted it for something, any more than I do now."

"What kind of animals did you catch?"

"Coons, and rabbits, and muskrats, and minks. I didn't catch so many minks, but I always set traps for them. Sometimes I caught a fox, and sometimes a marten. Once we caught a bear. I saw where he'd been scratching some trees to sharpen his claws, as folks say bears do, and I saw the tracks he'd made on his way to a cornfield: so I was sure of him. Grandsir helped me fix the trap."

"How did you make it?"

"We made it of logs, a clumsy figure four; and then, to be sure of the bear, we dug a good-sized pit and covered it with spruce-boughs. So down he went, logs and all; but he tried hard to get away, and, if he hadn't been hurt so bad, I don't know but he would. He was a heavy fellow. Grand-

sir got a bounty for killing him, besides what he sold him for; and somebody killed his mate the other side of the woods."

"I wish I could see a bear in the woods where he belongs!" exclaimed Robert, looking at his companion admiringly. "I've read a good deal about bears, but I should know more if I could see them at home. It don't amount to much to look at them in a cage."

"I shouldn't think it would. But I suppose somebody has told all about them in some book. I didn't have any book to learn it from: so I asked grandsir a good many questions. He told me about polar bears and grizzly bears. They are different from what live here, though he said they all liked pretty much the same kind of food. They all like sweet things. They'll find a tree or rock where there's wild honey better than any man can."

“ I should think they'd get stung.”

“ They do, but they want the honey so much they're ready to run the risk. They get along very well if the bees don't get into their eyes and nose. Then they roll over, and paw round terribly ; but they don't give up till they're satisfied. Once a man came to our house who didn't do any thing but hunt and trap, and fish ; and he told more about wild critturs, as he called them, than I ever heard before. He said he'd lived with them a good many years, so he knew their ways. I could set and heard him tell stories all night if grandsir hadn't sent me to bed. If he only knew how, he could make a book you'd like to read ; but he said he never'd read a dozen books in all his life. His father and mother lived in Canada somewhere, and they died when he was ten years old. After that he had to take care of himself. Grand-sir said he was naturally smart, but he was

strange. He never'd been into the States many times, and he didn't like to get far away from the woods. That was the only home he knew any thing about ; and he told me how to do if I was caught out over night. He said he should like to have me camp with him."

"Did he tell you lots of stories?"

"Yes, he did, and some about animals that don't live in this country. A man who was a great scholar had found him in the woods, and staid with him part of one summer, so to find out what he knew ; and he learnt a good deal as well as the man. You'd like to hear him talk. He used outlandish words, such as grandsir didn't allow me to ; but for all that he'd keep you awake when you'd thought you was sleepy."

"I wish you'd tell me the stories he told you. Don't you remember them?"

"Yes, I remember every thing. I should

then, too, more than I do now when so much happens. Sometimes for a whole week I wouldn't see anybody but grandsir, and he wouldn't speak to me only when he couldn't help it. I can't stop to tell you the stories now, but I will some time. Here we are at the mother-tree. Look up. It aint so handsome as it is in the morning when it's wet, but here's the lichen all the same. Jessie says that's what we ought to call it."

"Miss Austen told her, and she told us about the Spanish moss that grows on the trees down South. That is different from this, but it hangs down from the trees the same way. That has bark on it, and inside the bark is a stem that is used instead of hair for stuffing mattresses and cushions. It has flowers, though not large ones. This lichen don't have any."

"No, I guess not. I never saw any thing different from what there is here. I used to

call the little disks saucers, but Mr. Elliot told me better than that. This is covered thick with disks. You can get all you want. There's an old stump up here that has red-headed moss on it, and the heads are a good deal larger than they generally are. Come and see it."

There it was; an old stump which had been decaying for years, and yet would stand for years to come with scarcely a perceptible change.

"That's splendid," said Robert. "I wonder Jessie didn't tell me about it."

"She don't know about it," was replied. "You see, it stands here by itself, and she didn't come so far this way. I didn't either till the last day we were here before the storm."

"Well, I'm glad you found it; but what you call moss is lichen, and the name of it is *cladonia*. Miss Austen says there are differ-

ent varieties of lichens, the same as there are of flowers, and each one has a name. I found some like this on an old board the other day, and she said it was *cladonia*. That green down there is real moss. Miss Austen says she don't know so much as she ought to about mosses and lichens, and she is going to learn. Now, what else have you got to show me up here?"

"Not much, perhaps, that you'll care for. There are some holes in the trees where the woodpeckers had their nests last year, or some other time. I've seen a good many here; and in the north-west part of the woods there are half a dozen crows'-nests in the tops of the old hemlock-trees. Then I've seen a hole half way up a hollow tree, where I guess some owls have had a nest."

"Have you found a hawk's nest?"

"Not that I'm sure of, though I mean to keep a good lookout round a tree there is

farther east than we be. Grandsir told me to rob all the hawks' and crows' nests I could find, and I do. I don't have any pity on the ugly birds."

"No more do I. Don't you find any animals here?"

"Yes, squirrels and rabbits, and likely there are other creatures that haint showed themselves yet. There's a bright-eyed fellow cracking a nut in that tree beyond the spring. He's watching us, ready to start the minute he suspects danger. He must have his winter-quarters not far off. Last year was a good one for the squirrels. There were plenty of beech-nuts and acorns. I've seen the squirrels when 'twas hard work for them to get enough to eat, and I wouldn't kill them then, any more than I'd steal their nuts. They've a right to live unless they do too much mischief, or killing them will do somebody some good. I've killed a good

many since I came to Mr. Peavy's, because we wanted them to eat."

"You've helped the old folks, Harold."

"I hope so. They've helped *me*. They took me in when I was a stranger, and they've been good to me every day. You don't know what it is to me to have such a home, where there's somebody to be glad when I go into the house. They say they're glad too, and that's what makes it seem so much. Grandsir never said so. I used to wish he would, but he didn't."

Harold was in a more communicative mood than Robert had ever seen him, and the latter intentionally prolonged their walk until they found some well-filled buckets requiring to be emptied. The sap from the trees farthest up on the hill was carried in rude troughs to a holder prepared to receive it; thus saving much hard labor. The two talked of this arrangement, com-

plimenting the man who had devised such a plan.

Alone, Mr. Elliot found sufficient to employ his time, restless though he was under the burden of thought he could not throw aside. He was glad, however, when the familiar sound notified him that hard work was to be done. Kettle and pans were filled, and the fires replenished. He remembered other days, when in some lonely camp he watched other fires, while in his breast there burned the fire of an appetite which overmastered every noble impulse and pure desire.





CHAPTER XII.

HUNTING AND TRAPPING.

NOT long after this, when the moon was at its full, and a clear, cold atmosphere gave promise of improved walking as the evening advanced, Mr. Elliot and his daughter, with Robert Bumstead, went through the woods on their way to Mr. Peavy's.

It had been thought best to discontinue the society meetings before their interest began to flag; but, however this arrangement commended itself to the judgment of those best qualified to decide, there were those who regarded it as a great mistake.

Harold was more sorry than he cared to express, while Jessie secretly wondered that Miss Austen would ever consent to give up "such nice meetings." This visit, proposed by her father, was intended as some compensation for her disappointment.

Norah Borine, too, was sadly disappointed, when, after having twice crowded herself into the smallest possible space in one corner of the hall to listen to what might be said, she was told there would be no further opportunity for so doing.

"I wish I hadn't gone the twice," she said almost angrily. "It's all the time something coming to me I don't know, and I wish I didn't care."

"Why? Don't you want to learn?" asked Jessie.

"What's the use?" was replied. "I can't know it all, and I'm tired trying."

"You've only just begun; and every

thing's going to be beautiful now summer's coming. Miss Greenleaf's coming too. You're sure to like her, and we'll go to school together. Then we'll go all over the woods and fields with her, and see how many flowers we can find."

"You wont want me. I aint like you."

"I know it. You're a great deal prettier than I am; but I don't mind. I'm glad you're pretty."

The two faces, now side by side, both winning and attractive, were yet strikingly unlike. No one would have called Jessie Elliot handsome; while few could look upon her companion without yielding an involuntary tribute of admiration to the dark-eyed beauty.

"I'm just black," she exclaimed. "And I'm a Catholic. Mother says there's only us here, and the mistress hates Catholics."

"She don't hate anybody, Norah Borine.

It's wicked to hate, and she's good. But what makes you Catholics?"

"I don't know, and I don't care. It's our way, and nobody need be thinking we'll be heretics. We're as good as anybody if we be poor."

Jessie did not reply to this outburst. Her eyes seemed fixed on some object far away, as though she neither saw nor heard what was near to her. When she spoke, she said gently, "I wish you'd come and stay with me to-morrow afternoon. I'll get a nice supper, and we'll have a good time. Perhaps you'll make a picture, so I can learn how to make one too. Miss Austen says you have a genius for doing such things."

"Did she say so? Did she really say so?" was the eager response.

"Yes, she did. I shouldn't tell you if she didn't. She likes you, and I don't see how you can help loving her."

“I don’t help it. What can I do? We’re poor, and must work. Sure, she’s a lady though, granny says. I’d like to please her. I’d give her a picture if I thought” —

Here she left the room, returning presently with the result of her last effort in the blending of colors.

“Oh! that’s almost prettier than any of Miss Greenleaf’s,” said Jessie, clapping her hands softly. “How could you do it? My vase is homely now.”

“No, it aint. I learnt from that, and I found this card in mother’s trunk. It’s all the one I’ve got.”

“I’m glad you can make such pretty things. You must put this up somewhere where everybody that comes in can see it.”

“Didn’t you give Miss Austen a vase?”

“Yes, one a good deal prettier than mine. It had prettier Jew’s-ears.”

“I’ve got pretty ones too,” responded

Norah, as she displayed a basket filled with a great variety of this shell-like growth of fungus, the very name of which had so delighted her.

“Where did you find so many?” was asked at once.

“On stumps, and trees, and old boards. I want to know what makes them grow.”

“I don’t know. You must ask Miss Austen, or else wait for Miss Greenleaf. I never found such nice ones.”

“Mother thinks they’re pretty, and so does granny, though we never minded them till you showed me. They want you to come some evening when they’re here. Won’t you come to-morrow?”

“I would, but that’s the time to go to Mr. Peavy’s. I wish you’d go too. The old folks are nice, and Harold’s nice too.”

“No, he aint. That other big boy aint nice either. He took my bucket of water

and carried it for me. Sure, he'd no business. What made him?"

"He thought 'twas too heavy for you. He's always lifting heavy things for me. He's so strong he don't mind."

"I'm so strong I don't mind too; and I don't want to go with you. I sha'n't go to your house either, any more, till you come to see mother and granny."

"I'll come," answered Jessie, apparently unheeding the tone in which this assertion was made.

The next evening Robert caught a glimpse of Norah as he was passing her mother's rooms, and knew by the flashing of her eye that she was offended at his presumption.

"She's just the strangest girl," he half-whispered to Jessie. "Mother says she's like a wild fawn, afraid of every thing; but she's able to help herself. I know that. I've seen her lift more than I could when I

wa'n't older than she is. She's so small, too, she seems most like a baby."

"She wouldn't like to have you say that, Robert. I have to be ever so careful, and then I don't please her. She wa'n't even glad when Miss Austen sent her the maple sugar, though I know she liked it. But she won't be so always. I'm glad Harold aint so."

"I'm glad too; but he was that strange at first, I couldn't get on with him. I hope he'll talk to-night."

It was not yet dark when the party reached the little cottage, where they were cordially welcomed.

"We're having a late spring," remarked their host. "There'll be a hard freeze to-night."

"Yes, sir: there is every appearance of it, and that will give another run of sap."

"Going to boil again?"

“No, sir. We have suspended sugar-making for the season. Harold and I have other work on hand.”

“Going to do some building, I hear. Well, I’m glad to have folks prosper, and there aint no drawback now to that mill. I said that when I first heard how Miss Austen managed. She began right. I haint no doubt but she asked God to bless her in her undertaking, and that’s where her strength is. When our forefathers come to this country, and found what a cold, hard place ’twas, they’d had to give up if the Lord hadn’t been on their side; and I’ve watched all through life to see how folks prospered, and I can see the hand of God in it all.”

“But the best people are not the most prosperous, Mr. Peavy.”

“Mr. Elliot, that depends on how you look at it. Now, I don’t suppose you’d call

us poor old folks prosperous, but we be. We've always had comfortable shelter, and enough to eat and drink; and when we was getting so we couldn't get along without somebody younger and spryer than we be about the house, the Lord sent Harold to us; and he's the best boy ever I see, if I do say it to his face. It seems most strange that somebody else brought him up for us. I don't know how long he'll stay, but the One that sent him knows all about it."

"I'm glad he came, though I didn't know at first what to make of him," said Jessie softly, thus breaking an awkward silence.

"I meant to do right," responded Harold.

"You did. That wasn't the matter," was replied.

"He's a comfort every day. We've lived a good deal better all winter for having him here, and we're better off this spring. We've had a good many good meals that he's provided."

“I haint done much,” said the young man whom Mrs. Peavy praised in this hearty way.

“It’s much to us,” rejoined her husband. “When I was a boy like him, I was strong as he is. I could work all day, and keep awake half the night, and then work the next day. I went into the woods whenever I could get a chance, and I should been glad if I could hunted all the time : but it wa’n’t often I got a chance. Harold and I’ve talked it all over a good many times, and he knows pretty much all the hunting I’ve ever done.”

“It might have lost its zest if you had done more. Boys often mistake in such calculations.”

“I know it, I know it ; and ’twas best for me that I was kept to work. I guess, after all, the men that earn their living in the woods don’t have no very easy time.”

“They don’t. They’re exposed to all weathers and all dangers; and their work isn’t calculated to improve them much, mentally nor morally. Their senses of seeing and hearing become very acute, and they learn to depend upon themselves; but their lives are very narrow. A hunter’s life is a sort of hand-to-hand fight with animal strength or cunning. His whole study is to find out how he can outwit the creatures that trust to their instinct; and instinct is often more than a match for man’s reason.”

“And the poor things need all the Lord gives them, Mr. Elliot. Seems as though one was made to live upon another all the way through. It’s always the strong taking the weak, and there’s provision made for every thing. I’ve watched our squirrels and rabbits; and they’ve got so many enemies, the poor things have to be on the watch all the time.”

“They have many enemies ; and the rabbits especially are such timid creatures, they appeal to our sympathy more than some others.”

“What enemies have they, Mr. Elliot?” asked Robert, who knew little of the habits of animals, except what he had learned during the past winter.

“They vary somewhat with the locality,” was replied. “But everywhere most flesh-eating animals will make a supper of a rabbit if one is to be found. Here in New England, foxes, weasels, hawks, and owls are always on the lookout for rabbits. Then the lynx and other cat-like creatures devour them by thousands. They are used to bait traps ; and good bait they are too, as Harold knows by experience.”

“I do ; and Mr. Baulder said he baited for lynx with them. 'Twas a rabbit's head that the great white owl stole from my trap.”

“I’ve read that what we call rabbits here are really hares,” remarked Robert.

“I have read the same thing,” said Mr. Elliot. “The first settlers called them rabbits, and the name has clung to them. Hares are very generally distributed throughout the world, but they abound most in cold countries. No voyager has ever gone so far north that he didn’t see them; and it is said that in the arctic regions they live without making burrows, so protected by their thick fur, that they are able to endure the most severe cold. The polar bears and foxes eat them in great numbers.”

“Is there much difference between hares and rabbits?”

“So much that one who has made natural history a study can see a marked difference; but I am not able to explain it. It is well that rabbits have so many enemies. They would become a great pest. In an-

cient times, it is said there were so many in Spain that the country was completely overrun with them. The surface of the ground was so riddled with their burrows that it was worthless for cultivation. Then one of Nature's provisions was made to do good service. Ferrets were imported from Africa to check their increase ; and in time the ground was reclaimed. Ferrets have a great antipathy to rabbits ; and in some places they are muzzled, and set to hunting."

"What is a ferret, father?"

"An animal something like the weasel, pole-cat, or fougart. We have the weasel in this country, but the fougart is found only in Europe and Western Asia. Its fur is known as the fitch-fur, and commands a good price in market. It is hunted for this, and besides, it is so generally hated that every man's hand is against it. In England, where game is preserved, it makes great havoc

among the pheasants and rabbits. There are strict laws against poaching, but four-footed poachers manage to evade the law; though, when they are caught, their lives pay the penalty."

"I always thought them laws was dreadful wicked," remarked Mr. Peavy. "What are poor folks going to do if they can't take game where they find it?"

"Do without," was the reply.

"And starve?"

"They do starve sometimes. But in this country game is free, and the man who can't live here has himself to blame. Think, Harold, how it would be if snaring a rabbit or shooting a partridge was a crime. You couldn't have lived in England as you did with Mr. Dorsey."

"No, sir," and the flush on Harold Dorsey's face betrayed his notice of the unfamiliar title given to his childhood's guardian.

“Mr. Boulder couldn’t earn his living trapping either.”

“Not unless he owned a large tract of land, and then his living would be assured without any such effort. Tell us about him, Harold. I’ve heard you mention his name a good many times, but you never told me any thing particular about him. Did you ever see him more than once?”

“No, sir; but he told grandsir perhaps he’d come again some time. ’Twas two years ago last summer he came.”

“Perhaps he’ll come again this summer, and not find you,” said Robert. “He wouldn’t look for you here.”

“No, he wouldn’t. I don’t think he’s a very good man, but I should like to see him again. He talked with grandsir about the English laws. They both knew about them, and he said he’d seen a man that was dreadfully punished for carrying home a rabbit

when his wife was starving, and he swore when he said a rabbit's life was worth more than a woman's. He told me that our weasel was a good deal like the ermine that lives in Russia and Siberia."

"Siberia's the place where they send folks from Russia when they want to punish them, aint it?" now asked Mrs. Peavy.

"Yes, it is, and a dreadful place too," replied Mr. Elliot.

"I thought so," she responded. "I never was no great of a reader; but once I read the 'Exiles of Siberia,' and I haint forgot it to this day. I thought 'twas all true, but somebody said 'twa'n't nothing but a story."

"It is a story, but it is very nearly true for all that. It gives a true picture of the life led by the exiles. Some times they are required to furnish a certain number of sable or ermine skins; and this is one of the most dreadful punishments that can be inflicted upon them."

“But how can they if they don’t know how?”

“The government don’t trouble itself about that. If the ignorant hunter dies, there is only his family to mourn. But this punishment is only less cruel than being compelled to work in the mines. That is worst of all. Light and air, even if the light is dim and the air thick with frost, is better than being shut up in the bowels of the earth. But hunting in Siberia is bad enough for the inexperienced. The rough country is covered with snow to a great depth in the winter, and the exiles are as ignorant of the habits of fur-bearing animals as they can be. They’ve no idea, either, how to make themselves comfortable. Where Harold could live, and do a good business, they would die and do nothing.”

“I couldn’t do much there, Mr. Elliot. I should be discouraged, and I can’t work

when I'm discouraged. Perhaps Mr. Baulder could. He traps what he calls ermine in Canada, but he don't always have good luck. Something steals his bait or his game, and he'll lose a week's hard work. He trapped martens, and he could sell the skins for a good price ; but sometimes a wolverine would get on his track, and follow round from one trap to another. Then he'd find bait and game both gone. The wolverine eats the bait, but he don't eat martens."

"What did the man use for bait?"

"A partridge's head with the feathers on, and the trap is a long one. The wolverine is shy. He keeps close in the daytime, and travels in the night ; and when he can find a hunter's path, he can get over a good deal of ground in a short time. It's dreadful provoking, but men in the woods must expect such things. I remember Mr. Baulder said he should like to hunt sable in Siberia, and

I thought then I should like to go with him."

"Do you think so now, Harold?"

"No, sir. I want to learn all I can about animals, same as I do about every thing else; but I think there's something better to do than hunting them down and killing them."





CHAPTER XIII.

BY FOREST AND LAKE.

FEW boys can resist the charm with which fancy invests a tale of life in the woods ; while many a girl has lamented the fate which debarred her from sharing its exciting pleasures. The well-knit frame, keen eye, steady nerve, and unerring shot are calculated to win admiration. Days whose dawn is heralded by the crack of a rifle, and whose close is marked by the hearty repast an epicure might envy, seem to bring only happiness.

The long hours of waiting, the disappointments and vexations, are all ignored. The

driving storm, the pitiless cold, and possible accident or illness, are forgotten.

In his old home, Harold Dorsey had listened to the adventures of one, who, knowing no other life than that by stream and forest, was therewith content. Strange experiences had come to this man ; and in his brief visit many of these were recounted.

Knowing nothing of books, he had yet learned much from observation and occasional intercourse with others. Under favorable circumstances he might have been an enthusiastic student of natural history : as it was, he noted the habits of animals, and made this knowledge subservient to his interests. He had been present at the exhibition of several menageries of more or less pretensions ; himself an object of as much attraction to the ordinary visitor as were the untamed occupants of grated cages.

Mr. Dorsey was an intelligent man ; and,

although long secluded from the world, his conversation was instructive and entertaining. Taciturn, and often silent for hours when alone with Harold, with others he talked well and earnestly.

Mr. Baulder knew something of Siberian hunting, but his host knew far more. He had no desire to encounter the more ferocious beasts in their native jungles. The dangers which must there be met, and the hardships which must be borne, made no appeal to him. It was far otherwise, however, when the northern fields were considered. The sable was akin to the marten which he had trapped with the most persevering industry.

On the shores of the frozen sea, where winter holds its sternest sway, where, in the strange weird light, shadows assume gigantic proportions, the hunter pursues his prey, waking while others sleep, and making his way, at risk of life and limb, across extensive

tracts of country, broken by concealed ravines and jagged stones. If a free man and successful, he thus gains food for himself and family. Sometimes also, by what is deemed a wondrous fortune in securing furs of choicest color and texture, he wins an independence.

Eyes grew luminous as the picture was unfolded, and the wish was expressed which Harold had repeated.

“I should like to live in the woods a while,” said Robert.

“I’ve no doubt you would if every thing was made easy for you,” replied Mr. Elliot with a smile. “You’re a good boy to work, and you’re quick to learn ; but you wouldn’t know what to do to begin with. In some places you might catch fish ; but you wouldn’t know how to cook it unless you had your mother’s spider along with you. Now, should you, Robert?”

“I could cook it in the ashes if I had a fire, and of course I should have a fire,” was responded good-naturedly. “I could wrap it in paper, and roast it.”

“But if you had no paper?”

“Roll it up in some clean, sweet leaves as I’ve read of the Indians doing; or else cover it up, and then take off the skin when I wanted to eat it. I could do something.”

“Yes, I guess you could; but, if you ever try camping out, I advise you to take Harold with you.”

“Folks can learn how to make one thing do for another,” remarked Mrs. Peavey. “They don’t have to so much as they used to, but ’taint as though they couldn’t. I’ve heard my mother say she made her own pearlash for a good while after she was married; and I’ve done it too. We didn’t have saleratus in them days, — not such folks as we were, — but we had to have something to lighten our cakes.”

“How did you get it?” asked Jessie.

“We burned corn-cobs and saved the ashes. I’ve made good biscuit with them many a time. Folks can do without so many store things as they have now, and not starve neither; just as anybody that’s strong and well can learn to live on what they pick up in the woods. The men and women that settled this country had to keep their eyes open, and their hands busy. I’ve pitied them a good many times.”

“And well you may,” rejoined Mr. Elliot. “In such lives as they led there is little time for mental improvement. The common people had but few books. I should be sorry to have my Jessie brought up with no more advantages than a poor man’s daughter could have then.”

“It’s likely you would; but I guess folks didn’t think much about such things then. They couldn’t. When my grandsir and

grandmam was married, they went right into the woods, and set up housekeeping in a log-cabin that hadn't but one room. There wa'n't much chinking, either, between the logs ; and one night, when grandmam waked up and opened her eyes, she see another pair of eyes looking straight at her through the logs. Come to find out, there was a wolf scratching away to get at her. He was out doors, and she was in the house ; but for all that they were pretty nigh together. I've heard grandmam tell of it a good many times."

"Wa'n't she dreadfully frightened?"

"I guess she was, child. Grandsir said she screamed so you might heard her a mile, though she want easy to scare. Wolves and bears were plenty in them days; wild-cats too ; and a man needed to know how to use a gun before he was fit to think of bringing up a family."

“That’s true,” said the old man. “Game was plenty then, and folks had to depend upon it a good deal for a living. If they planted corn, there was the crows to pull it up to begin with ; and when it come to the ear, the bears and coons and squirrels were sure to get a large share. This part of the country was new then, and the bears made dreadful work in the cornfields. The woodchucks took the beans, and the farmers had a hard time of it.”

“They must have had to fight all the time.”

“They did, and they brought up their boys to. The pig-pen had to be looked after pretty close, or there wouldn’t be any pork. Bears don’t object to eating pigs. To tell the truth, they’ll eat most any thing, though my grandmam used to say they didn’t like soap.”

“What made her say that, Mr. Peavy ? ”

“ Well, you see, she treated one to soap, and she thought she knew about it. She was making soap one afternoon, when she heard something push the outside door open, and when she looked round she saw a big bear making for the cradle where her baby was asleep. She didn’t scream, nor faint away, but she threw a ladleful of boiling soap straight into his face and eyes. That made the crittur mad, and he turned his attention to her ; but his eyes smarted so he couldn’t see very well ; and before he could take his bearings she gave him another ladleful of soap. He was satisfied then, and blundered out of the house the best way he could. She could hear him growling and floundering round, but she just barred the door, and kept still till grandsir come, and then he started after the crittur. ’Twas easy tracking him. He’d run against most every thing ; and he’d laid down, and rolled

over every few rods. He was tearing at his face when grandsir put him out of his misery, but he want worth so much as bears in general. He was poor, and the soap had pretty nigh spoiled his skin."

"I should a good deal rather hear about such things than see them," said Jessie. "Oh, dear! how can folks live so?"

"They get used to it, and they keep on the watch without really knowing it. Such bears as are found in this part of the country are inoffensive animals compared with the grizzlies of the Far West, and the white bears of arctic regions."

"I suppose they be, Mr. Elliot. I've heard a little about them grizzlies, and I shouldn't want any thing to do with them. They belong to the Indians."

"But white men hunt them as successfully as Indians. Our people are as brave as savages, and after a time they learn as much

caution. They can pick their way, too, as well and as stealthily if they're brought up to it. That's how the advantage is gained. No man can match himself with these animals in a trial of mere strength. White bears can tear to pieces heaps of stone and ice that are frozen solid together, as easily as a boy can toss a football; and men have often lost provisions in this way, when they seemed as safe as if cased in iron. But, after all, the creatures must do their best to live, and take food where they can find it."

"Yes, yes: the Lord made them for some use. I don't know what 'tis; but they've all got a place in his plan, from the smallest fly to the largest elephant. I suppose there'd be a gap if one was missing; and sometimes, seems to me, the little ones are of the most consequence."

"I have no doubt that they are: many of them play a very important part in the world's history."

“How can that be?” asked Harold; but, before his question could be answered, a neighbor came in, and the conversation drifted to subjects more immediately practical.

“Miss Austen’s going home, aint she?” was remarked.

“Yes, she is, for a few weeks,” was the reply.

“Well, I’m sorry. She brightens up things a good deal, when she’s round; and the girls about here think she’s a pattern for them.”

“They can’t do better than take pattern by her,” said Mrs. Peavy. “She aint no more set up with her money, than I be without any; and she’s capable anywhere she tries to do any thing. Strange how much she knows.”

“So ’tis. I never see no woman know so much before; and that young Stuart’s smart

too. Things are going all right to the mill."

"Yes, as near right as they need to."

"And them meetings, Sunday nights. Going to keep right along too?"

"I suppose they are."

"Well, I didn't know but they'd stop, same as the Thursday-night ones. Them meetings was the strangest I ever knew; but they set folks to thinking."

"Guess they did, Mr. Jones. They set me to thinking, old as I be. They was all about God's works one way and another."

"Yes, I suppose they was, though 'taint everybody would see it so. They say the men that are all the time studying such things aint the ones that think most about God. They say they don't more'n half believe there is any God, and they don't want to hear nothing about One that made every living thing. You're a scholar,

Mr. Elliot, and likely you understand how 'tis."

"I believe the fact is very much as you have stated it," was replied somewhat coldly.

"Well, it's a pity. I don't make no pretension to being a Christian, like Neighbor Peavy, but I like to see credit give where it belongs. It stands to reason that there's somebody, somewhere, that set the world to running, and fitted it up just as he wanted to. I don't see how anybody can dodge that; do you?"

"Some people find it easy to do so."

"Well, perhaps they do. Neighbor Peavy, what do you think about it?"

"I think we can't look round out doors a single minute, without seeing something that ought to make us look straight up to God. We've been talking about animals to-night, and they're all made different: but, you see,

they've all got the qualities they need. Some are strong and clumsy ; and some that are weak are swift of foot, and cunning to hide themselves out of sight. Them that can't fight to good advantage can run away. Now, there's the fox : he's a coward, but he's a sharp-witted fellow, and knows how to keep a man at his heels all day without being caught."

"That's a fact. I've tried it myself when I was young. Old Mr. Bradford can tell you of a good many such days' works."

"He's given up hunting, haint he?" asked Mrs. Peavy.

"He was out this last snow, his eightieth birthday, and caught a silver fox : the first he's caught of that kind for ten years. He started off in the morning, and was gone all day."

"That was smart for a man a year older than I am ; but he was always tough and

wiry, not a pound of spare flesh on his bones; and he's lived out doors till he most belongs there. If you boys want to hear fox stories, just make him a visit. He hunted wolves, too, when he was young."

"Does he keep a pack of hounds?" asked Mr. Elliot.

"He haint got but two now. They're good ones though; and, if any thing should happen to him, I haint no doubt but they'd find a way to help him. They'll mind a snap of his fingers; and, when he's talking, they look at him as though they understood every word he said."

"I don't doubt but what they do. Dogs know more than folks think for. When I was a boy, my father had a large brindled dog we thought most as much of as we did of one of the family. We called him Old Sam, and we never knew him to do any mischief; but one of our neighbors lost a good

many sheep in a mountain pasture, and finally we see Old Sam coming from that way, and stopping at a brook as if to wash his chops. The man came over to our house and told his story, and made out a pretty strong case, though father didn't quite believe it.

“The dog was there, hearing it all, and never stirring so much as one of his paws, till the neighbor said, ‘If you don't shoot him, I shall.’ Then Old Sam went out of the house like a streak of lightning, and we couldn't none of us call him up. He saved his life, but the man kept losing his sheep all the same. They found tracks where some kind of a crittur had been round, and sometimes it looked as though there'd been more of a fight than a sheep would engage in. Some said they was wolves, and some said they was dogs, though they couldn't find out any thing certain, the tracks was so queer.

“In about two weeks Old Sam came back just at daylight one morning, with his chops bloody, and his face dreadfully tore up. There was the marks of sharp teeth on his back and sides, and he acted as though he was most beat out. We knew he'd had hold of something besides sheep. He was so poor, we knew he'd been half starved; but he wouldn't eat. When father came in he whined like a baby, and looked up to him as though he wanted to speak. That was too much for father. He stooped, and put his hand on the dog's head; and then you ought to have heard Old Sam beg for somebody to go off with him. We boys were ready as soon as we got leave to start; and we followed as fast as we could, but the dog had to wait for us a good deal.

“At last we come to the pasture, and he kept straight on to one corner, the highest there was, where there was a brush fence

piled up till you couldn't tell whether the trees had been blowed down or felled. There was the mischief; but for a spell we couldn't tell what 'twas, though Old Sam scratched and tore away at a great rate. Then he went to the other side of the fence where there was a great ledge of rocks that looked as though there'd been an earthquake. We went over there too, but we couldn't get no clew to the cause of the trouble.

“ We begun to hunt round the brush-heap again, and finally we found a hole large enough for a common-sized dog to go into. We tried it with a stick, and found it run along pretty nigh the ground. We heaved off the brush as much as we could; and by this time Old Sam laid down as if he was satisfied that things was going about right, and he could afford to rest.

“ Well, to make a long story short, we

kept to work till we couldn't go no further without help, and we'd made up our minds that we was on the sheep-killer's track. Then I started home for father. I coaxed the dog to go with me, but 'twas much as I could do to get him there, he was so weak. Father didn't need no hurrying when I told him what we'd seen ; and 'twa'n't long before we was back to the pasture, with as many axes and shovels as we could carry. We stove up that heap of brush, and dug open the underground road till we found where it led to in the ledge. Now, boys, what do you suppose we found there ? ”

“ A wolf,” answered Harold unhesitatingly.

“ That was just what 'twas, youngster, — dead too, though he hadn't been dead long. As nigh as we could calculate, he and Old Sam had had a fight where the ground was a good deal tore up under some light

brush, where we didn't notice it at first, and likely they'd held on till the dog couldn't stand it no longer. Then the wolf could crawl back to his den, but he marked the way.

“An old man in the neighborhood said wolves didn't commonly manage as this one did; but you see he wa'n't a common wolf. He'd lost his tail, and he hadn't got but two feet. One leg was gone to above the knee, and the other to a little below it. It must been a hard job for him to walk; but his teeth were all good, so we judged he wa'n't very old.”

“But I don't see how he could have kept on killing one sheep after another, and not left marks round so he could be followed up.”

“Well, I don't think none strange of that. Father and the neighbors talked it over a good deal, and 'twa'n't nothing but the cun-

ning such critturs have that helped him. But then, you see, there was hiding-places under the brush, and likely he didn't get out a great ways. The sheep would go up there when it come night because 'twas the highest place they could get to ; and, if the truth was told, the man that owned them didn't look after his stock as he ought to."

"How did you account for the dog's staying away that fortnight ? "

"He staid to watch the wolf, and kept hid when there was anybody round."

"But you said his chops were bloody before he was accused of killing sheep."

"Yes, but I don't know how that come about. Maybe he had a tussle with the varmint, and come off worsted. Any way, I never believed he'd kill a sheep. It took a good while to get him nursed up, but at last he got to be well and spry again ; and, if

he didn't understand the wolf story when he heard it told, I'm mistaken."

"Somebody could tell you how that wolf lost his feet and his tail."

"Yes, they could. We heard how he lost one foot. 'Twas in the spring of that same year. He was caught in a trap about twenty miles from our town, and he gnawed it off. 'Twas on the other side of a wide strip of woods; and I most pitied the crittur, when I thought how much he must have undergone before he got to a stopping place."

"Well now, Mr. Jones, I can't say I ever pitied a wolf. I want brought up to. They're a bloodthirsty set, though when they're hungry they must eat if they can get any thing."

"That's one view of the subject," said Mr. Elliot. "The other is, that man must protect himself against beasts of prey so far as he can. In old times the people of Bos-

ton were obliged to fence in their cattle to save them from the wolves, and a bounty was paid for every wolf-skin brought to the proper officers. Now we seldom hear of them, except in the far North and West. But they serve some good purpose. They will run down foxes, and capture them with ease, besides ridding the country of a host of small quadrupeds."

"What does quadruped mean, father?"

"An animal with four feet. You remember Mr. Stuart told us last winter, that animals are divided into classes."

"Yes, I know he did; but he didn't go on, so we could learn all about it."

"I wanted him to," said Robert.

"You've learned something for yourself since then."

"Yes, Mr. Elliot, I have. My natural history tells about the orders and classes. The dog and the wolf belong together, for all they're so different."

Again Mr. Peavy spoke of the wonderful increase of knowledge in regard to those things, which in his boyhood had received little or no attention from the people by whom he was surrounded.

“It’s likely there was natural histories then, but I didn’t know nothing about them,” he said. “I guess, though, boys was pretty much the same then they be now. I’d sit up any time to hear talk about horses and dogs and cats, — yes, and rats too,” added the old man, laughing as he remembered his experience in attempting to rid his father’s house of these troublesome vermin.

“Guess I’ll tell you about my rat scrape,” he continued. “When I was a boy, I was always trying experiments; and somebody told me that, if I’d serve a warning on the rats to leave, they’d all go off. So I made out a writing threatening them with death, and hid it in the garret where father kept

his corn. Now, I expected, just as much as could be, that there wouldn't be no more trouble with rats ; but, instead of that, I got myself into a fine pickle. We had just as many rats, and one of my brothers found the warning, and read it to the whole family. I never heard the last of that as long as I see one of my brothers and sisters. A weasel came round after a while, and did up the job pretty quick."

"Didn't you keep a cat?"

"Yes, two or three. But some years the farmers were pretty nigh overrun with rats, spite of every thing they could do. They went from one house to another. One morning early, when there was a light snow on the ground, a woman that was going home after watching with a sick neighbor, see a drove of rats go away from a barn, and take a straight line to a house about a quarter of a mile off. She told what she see,

and there was others that went to look at the tracks; and 'twa'n't long before there was loud complaints from the house where they stopped."

From discussing the habits of rats, which, insignificant as the creatures may seem, often demand attention for economic reasons, the transition to their natural enemies was easily made. So the evening passed in desultory conversation, which yet returned again and again to subjects having a common basis. As surely, too, was the fact of God's overruling providence kept constantly before the mind.

When the guests were about to take their leave, Jessie whispered the request that there might be a chapter read from the Bible, and a prayer offered. "That would be almost like a meeting," she said to Mrs. Peavy.

"Husband, hadn't we better have prayers

before our friends go home?" then asked the good woman.

"Yes, wife, if they'll stop," was replied.

Mr. Elliot, who was standing, resumed his seat; and, as Harold begun to read, he listened with marked attention.

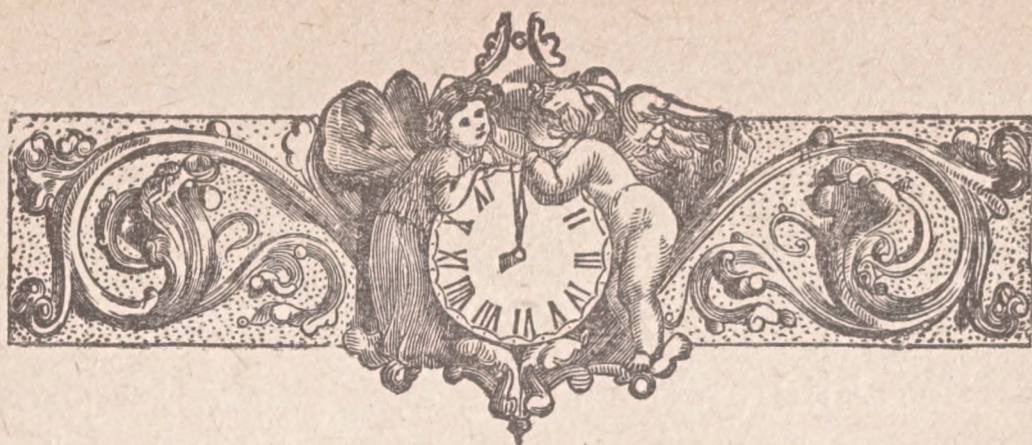
As the reading was ended, the reader and the old man knelt. Jessie and Robert following their example at once. A few words of prayer were uttered; and then one, who since the days of his earliest childhood had never bowed the knee in token of his reverence for God, assumed the posture befitting those who make petition to the august Ruler of the universe.

The priest of the household carried a burden upon his heart. Longing with an intense desire for the salvation of an immortal soul, he made known his wants so simply and lovingly, that the proudest scorner could have found no cause for anger: surely not

he who realized his guilt, and his need of forgiveness.

“I thank you for remembering me,” said Richmond Elliot clasping the hand of his host for a moment; and without further ceremony he left the house.





CHAPTER XIV.

A RE-UNION.

THERE was a family re-union in the old Austen home. No invitations had been issued, or arrangements made for such a meeting, and there was nothing of ceremony connected with it; yet there were speeches in abundance, and such cheer as delights those who partake. Cousin Rachel must have had a presentiment of what was to come, else her store of good things would have failed to meet the demand.

“I’m going to start for Aunt Margaret the minute school is done,” said Mason Stuart, as he refolded a tiny note received

only the morning before her arrival. "She promised to let me know the very day she was coming, and I mean to be the first one of the children to see her. I'm glad Rufe has got the last of that wood in. We had a hard job yesterday, but we were bound to finish up. Mr. Wilmarth said it was done in good shape too. Tell you what, mother, it's a big thing for a boy like Rufe to earn so much money, and keep up with his class in school too. It makes me feel as though we were a shiftless set."

"I don't think we're a bit shiftless ; do you, mother?" exclaimed Hester, looking up from a piece of worsted embroidery which had apparently engrossed her whole attention. She had been the happy possessor of a well filled insect-case for the last six months ; and recently her busy brain had conceived the idea of duplicating it upon canvas. Where it was possible, she availed

herself of patterns. Where this could not be done, she traced the outlines herself, and carefully copied each mark and line of the original; often failing to reproduce the gleam of gold and green, yet always evincing rare skill and taste. The brightest of colors were mingled with the most sombre; all standing out clear and distinct from the white ground with which they contrasted.

“I don’t think we’re a bit shiftless,” she continued. “You ask Aunt Comfort what she thinks. Only yesterday you said Lilla and I knew the most of any girls of our age you ever saw.” This last was said triumphantly; and, with a toss of her shapely head, the busy worker threaded her needle anew.

“I was comparing ourselves with Rufe, and you can’t say but what he does more than we do,” was the quick response. “He worked twelve hours, day before yesterday,

and then studied till he went to sleep over his book. You never did as much as that, nor I either."

"I know it, but I'm not shiftless. That's a dreadful word. I'd rather be most any thing than that. That's what Aunt Comfort calls folks when they go round with ragged dresses, and holes in the heels of their stockings; and I don't do so."

"No, you don't, Hester; but, if it come to earning money, you'd find you couldn't do much. You couldn't earn it making worsted butterflies."

"You don't know that certain. Perhaps I could. Everybody don't do the same thing. Besides, you can't tell what folks can do till they try. You didn't suppose Edward could work same as he does."

"No, I didn't; that's a fact. He's done well, and I'm proud of him; though there can't anybody make me believe he could have done it without Aunt Margaret."

“I don’t suppose he could; but there’s always something or somebody to help. Aunt Margaret helps you.”

“And don’t I always say so? I aint much if you take me all alone. Your butterflies and bugs are nice enough. Aunt Margaret will be sure to say you’ve improved since she went away. I hope I sha’n’t forget to walk without limping this afternoon. When I’m in a hurry, I hitch along in pretty bad shape. You give me a pinch, will you, Hester, if you see me at it?”

“Yes, I will. I won’t pinch hard though. I gained half an hour this morning.”

“And I too,” chimed in Lilla, who was as busy with flowers as was her sister with bugs.

“Good for you both,” shouted Mason. “It’s a fact that we’re getting to be a remarkable family, — Madge and Clarke too, as well as we three. Nellie says Clarke improves every day; and she ought to know: she sees him often enough.”

“ I believe my children are all doing well,” said Mrs. Stuart, smiling. “ They are a great comfort to me.”

“ Then we’re prospering, too, mother. When Aunt Margaret comes, you see if you don’t feel more than half glad you lost that money. I always *was* glad. It’s been the making of Ed and Clarke. Now I must find out if Aunt Comfort wants me to do any thing for her before I go to school. Comfort’s a queer name for a woman, ain’t it? but she’s a comfort, any way, when a fellow does about right. When he don’t, he deserves to hear something about it.”

As this same Aunt Comfort had been a fixture in Mrs. Stuart’s kitchen for the last ten years, it may be that she deserves a more formal introduction to my readers than she has yet received. Certain I am that Mason would have given a particular description of her to any one interested in the family who

had failed to meet her. He would have said that she looked "real good and motherly, and knew how to do all kinds of work ; that she always kept things nice, and didn't want folks tracking mud over her clean floor." This would have been the starting point from which he would have wandered in various directions ; but it will suffice for me to say, that, having a large measure of Yankee thrift, she had patience with all imperfections save those which she designated by the general term "shiftlessness."

"Haint a single chore I want done," she said in reply to the boy's offer of assistance. "There aint so much work to do here as there used to be. If your Aunt Margaret and Edward have been *making* money, we've been *saving* it ; and a penny saved is as good as two earned. Now don't hurry to-day, and get so flustered you'll miss your lessons. Perhaps you might gain an hour, and get dis-

missed before school's done. Ask your mother though."

This suggestion was received with marked demonstrations; and, because of it, Mason Stuart was first to welcome his aunt. Not a word was spoken as he bounded into the library, and threw his arms about her neck.

"Aunt Margie, I know I never loved you half so well before," he said at length, when both kisses and tears had testified to his joy. "It's been dreadful lonesome without you."

"And I have missed you too."

"I'm glad of it. I didn't know but you'd like Edward so well you'd think he'd answer for the whole of us."

"He answers for one; but he is not Mason, or Clarke, or Dick."

"Well, now, you did say Dick, didn't you? I told Madge you would, and if I was in his place I never'd be called Richard in all my life. Dick means *him*, and Richard

means his *father* ; and they aren't a bit more alike than they used to be. He'll be round here in an hour or two with the rest of the children. I've got so much I want to say and hear, I don't know where to begin. Can't I go with you when you go back to Austenville ? I want to camp out in the woods."

"Not very good weather for that," responded Miss Austen, as she pressed the two brown hands which lay in her own. "We have snow in the woods, and the ground would be a damp bed. When you have your summer vacation, you can live out of doors ; until then, school will be better for you than our woods and hills."

"That settles my fate," was then said somewhat ruefully ; but the cloud passed, when was added, "I shall have two whole months vacation, and I'll make the most of it. Did you know Dick was studying medicine, Margie ?"

“I have not heard that he was.”

“Well, he don’t talk about it; but he has bought some books, and he recites to Dr. Gray. I caught him studying one day, and I told him he needn’t take the trouble to be so sly about it. It aint any thing to be ashamed of. I shouldn’t wonder if he made a good doctor.”

“And what profession have you chosen?”

“I haven’t really chosen yet. I can’t quite make up my mind. Mother says there’s no hurry. You see, I’m not very old yet.”

“Not very,” replied his aunt, smiling at the gravity with which this was said, and yet secretly admiring his earnestness.

“I could do almost any thing I should set myself about,” he continued. “I don’t think I shall go to college. Ed is the one who ought to go; and, if he don’t, the rest of us better not. That’s what I think; don’t you?”

"I am not sure that I do. By the time you are fitted for college, there will be more money in the family than there was when Edward decided to leave his books for a while."

"I don't doubt that: you're going to make money up there like sluice."

"How is that?"

"Well, as fast as you want to. I suppose it means that money will come pouring into your lap, the same as water runs through a sluiceway when it has a good head."

"Money will never come to us like that. We expect to work for it; and we expect, too, that we shall some time meet with losses. Moreover, water does not run through a sluiceway unless circumstances are favorable; so your comparison is hardly of the best."

"I know it, but that's the way some people talk; and I'm a great deal more apt to

learn the wrong way than the right. I only meant that you are likely to make a good deal of money."

"I think we are, and we hope to do good with it."

"Of course you will. You're doing good all the time; and there never any thing happened in our family, half so well for us, as losing that ten thousand dollars. It would have been the ruin of Clarke, if he had kept on thinking he could have every thing he wanted without working for it. He is pretty particular now how he looks, but he's not half so bad as he used to be. It has made a difference with the girls too. Aunt Comfort says they're getting real handy about doing work."

"I judged so from their letters; but tell me about yourself. You wrote me that you had some business to talk over with me."

"Yes, auntie, I have," was replied; and at

once he proceeded to speak of what most interested him, which, as might be supposed, concerned others rather than himself.

The clock struck five, and soon after a bevy of young people were seen approaching the house.

“Now, Mason Stuart, it is just like you to get here before any of the rest of us!” exclaimed Hester as he met them in the hall.

“You think Aunt Margie belongs all to you.”

“And to you too,” added a familiar voice which sent a thrill of gladness to every heart.

Just the same, only fairer and dearer for her long absence, Margaret Austen was escorted to the library by an admiring group. Then hardly had the confusion subsided, when Mrs. Stuart and Mrs. Fielding appeared; the former looking more serenely happy than her sister had seen her since her

nusband's death, while the face of the latter wore even a more dejected expression than usually characterized it.

"I believe you have grown younger while you have been away," said Mrs. Fielding. "I don't know how it is that care never worries you. You must have a great deal there at Austenville. You are mistress."

"That is what Mr. Bumstead calls me. But I have no cause to worry. I have enjoyed the winter."

"I should know that by your looks and by what I have heard. I suppose you have reason to be, too, and I congratulate you. You have always been a happy woman;" and a sigh supplemented this assertion.

Dick Fielding glanced at his mother pityingly. He knew something of her trials, and gave her his sympathy in largest measure.

This was the family reunion. The evening was spent in free, glad interchange of

thought and feeling. It was so pleasant to have the house open with Margaret as the ruling spirit, the pleasure could hardly be expressed.

"I do wish you would never go away again," said Madge addressing her aunt.

"Then I guess you wouldn't have much of a time next vacation," rejoined Mason. "I didn't see how we were going to get through the winter without Margie; but we did, and we got pretty well waked up too; all because there was something going on where she was. Tell you what, auntie, we've got notes about a good many things we never should have thought of, if it hadn't been for your Thursday evening meetings in Austenville."

"Mason's notes are most of them in Madge's handwriting," remarked Clarke.

"That's true, and I've paid her for doing the writing. Besides, she was as

much interested as I was. Weren't you, Madge?"

"Yes, just as much. Mason is always willing to give as much as he receives."

"Thank you for saying that, and I'm glad you know it. I want help pretty often, but I want to help other folks too. When Aunt Comfort sews on a patch for me, I do something for her."

"She must work cheap, or you wouldn't find time to do much for any one else. I've seen some elaborate patching in the last few months."

"Not so elaborate as some of your sentences," was replied good-naturedly. "I can't afford to wear nice clothes about my work, and I don't want to either. Mother isn't as particular about it as she used to be, and I'm glad of that. You aren't either, Clarke. Aunt Margie, I think there's a prospect of Clarke's being something besides a dandy."

He has promised to take care of the garden this year. I've no doubt he'll wear gloves, and leave the dirtiest part of the work for me; but it will be a good deal if he does any thing."





CHAPTER XV.

NARCOTICS.

MANY hours were spent by Miss Austen and Dick Fielding in close counsel, when the young man's interests were fully discussed. Having turned his thoughts to the study of medicine, he had decided to pursue it should circumstances prove favorable.

But his father was likely to object. The loss of the previous year, although inconsiderable, had been felt ; and this, with a growing dissatisfaction at having disposed of his claim upon Austenville, had a most unfortunate influence. The son was too loyal to

betray any weakness which could be covered ; but the fact that he was expected to engage at once in some remunerative employment was well known.

“I think we are like trees, which need watching and tending to prevent our growing gnarled and crooked,” said Dick to his aunt one day as they were resting, after having taken a general survey of orchard and nursery. “You can bend a young tree in any direction you please. By and by, when the tree is old, you can break it more easily than you can bend it. It is so with children compared with the men and women they will be when they are grown up.”

“It is indeed. Some trees, springing up by the wayside from a chance seed, grow tall and straight and symmetrical. So some neglected children become noble men and women. But the reverse is usually true. Most of us need watchful care, and skilful

training. Trees must be pruned also ; and so our characters need pruning. Habits are easily formed which require harsh treatment to eradicate."

"Some children are taught bad habits. They are trained to deception and dishonesty."

"More's the pity. They must bear the punishment of their sins, while others bear the guilt."

"Yes ; and, if others could only bear the punishment, the poor children would not be such objects of pity. They seem to me like the old yew-trees that were pruned in one direction, and extended in another, bent here, and twisted there, until they were made to assume the shape of dragons and other fabled monsters."

"Your comparison is a good one, Dick. The firm, hard wood of the yew, and the great age to which it attains, make it stand

for centuries, a monument to the skill of the gardener."

"But it needs continued pruning to keep its form unchanged."

"I know it does; and yet it never quite loses its first impress, any more than does a human soul. There was always a weird charm for me about the yew. I never read of one without thinking of ghosts and goblins. I used to sit and dream what stories the old English yews could tell if they would speak."

"And what secrets of bird and beast and insect our forest-trees could reveal. It seems to me the most fascinating knowledge is hidden from us to try what manner of minds we have."

"Yet Nature holds her secret in waiting."

"She does; and, as Mason says, if we only take a little trouble, we can find a bit of one thing, and a bit of another, till we

have material for a nice piece of patchwork. Then, if we can put it together handsomely, we can make a good show in the world. He don't like patchwork quilts ; but he thinks they're a good deal better than no quilts at all."

"Mason is not far from right. Our knowledge, at the best, is only a piece of patchwork. There are some exceptions to this, as when a person makes a specialty of one branch of science. Then he may fashion a web, pure and white, and of elaborate design ; but it must needs be both short and narrow."

"How well you said that, Aunt Margaret ! I shall not forget it. If I am to study medicine, I am sure my web will be but patchwork. Nothing will come amiss to me, from an analysis of the humblest weed to the most world renowned plant. I am inclined to believe that there is a remedy to every dis-

ease, as well as an antidote to every poison. I have lately come across an old book, full of curious descriptions of medicinal plants and trees. Half of these descriptions must be false; but for all that they have interested me. They have set me to thinking too."

"That is something gained. We should get dreadfully stupid if there were nothing to stir our curiosity. We need to be continually making new starts. Then we learn how much there is deserving our attention. I have been astonished, this last winter, to find how easily people are turned from their usual modes of thinking, and how soon you can call forth an expression of interest where you have least reason to expect it. I have learned a great deal myself. We have some children among us who are apt teachers. I thought I knew something of trees; but I have found that my knowledge is very lim-

ited. Our Robert is very practical; and he often surprises me with questions it is impossible for me to answer.

“Is he like Mason?”

“Not at all.”

“I thought he might be in asking questions. Only last week, Mason told me I ought to be a botanical encyclopædia. He said, if he ever started on a particular track, he should know every stone and pebble in the way, and be able to tell the name of it. He still believes in stones and fossils, although he has found that other objects have attractions. Our evening talks on natural history and botany have been more to him than to the rest of us. He is spur and whip for us all. The pines on the hill out there need looking after, Aunt Margaret,” said the young man, interrupting himself. “The grubs and beetles must be hard at work on them. I was reading, the other day, that some

if the German forests are in danger of being entirely destroyed by insects. Trees have their attendants everywhere. Whole colonies of insects live upon them; and some give in return for what they take so largely. But, as a general thing, our common insects give us very little. Fortunately, we have not so many as the warmer countries.”

“I am glad we have not. I never could share in Hester’s enthusiasm for them. Robert Bumstead intends to study the habits of insects this summer; and I shall be disappointed if he does not find it a pleasant recreation.”

“I presume he will. It may be that distance lends enchantment to the insect life of warmer countries. I remember the first time I read of cochineal, and I have always wished I could see the little creature which contributes so largely to our brilliant colors; but it is only a few days ago that I learned how lac is produced.”

“ It is a kind of resin, is it not ? ”

“ Yes, it is ; but it does not exude directly from a tree. In India, a species of fig-tree is the pasture ground for hosts of insects that crowd the young twigs, and from these insects the lac exudes in large quantities. Fig-trees have a milky juice, and in some way I suppose the raw material is changed by the little workmen.”

“ That is the most wonderful thing of all ; and the order of trees to which figs belong abounds in wonders. The famous banyan-tree on the Nerbudda, with a circumference of three thousand feet, and its two hundred living columns, is a grander cathedral than the world can boast. I have looked for hours at the picture of the banyan-tree in my old geography. When I was a child in school, I always turned to that when I wished to rest my eyes. I used to think I would certainly see it, and I quite envied a

lady who went to India as a missionary. Before I knew much of botany, I thought it very strange that plants of such opposite qualities should be grouped together."

"So I thought, and even now I have hardly reached the point where my wonder ceases. I have been studying up medicinal plants, and in doing that I have learned many strange facts. My old book has given me hints which I have followed up until I found, that, where there was an actual falsehood in statement, there was usually some truth to suggest the falsehood. When magic was in repute, magicians understood the properties of narcotics, and knew how to make them available."

"Tell me about it, please, Dick. I have read of magical arts, but I never understood their secret. I knew, of course, that they were not supernatural, but I never troubled myself to seek an explanation."

“ I am not able to explain it fully. I only know what my old book says, and what I have learned by studying cause and effect. You know that belladonna dilates the pupils of the eyes, and makes them unnaturally brilliant.”

“ Yes : I fancy that has been known by ladies and ladies’ maids for many centuries.”

“ And now the oculist takes advantage of it when he wishes to make a critical examination of a diseased eye. Mandragora, a cousin of belladonna as Mason would say, was a favorite with sorcerers. Stramonium seeds were made use of too. A magician could easily persuade his dupes to drain the magic cup. Besides, he could fill his room with the smoke of burning drugs, and so intoxicate the senses of those who entered.”

“ I remember to have read of clouds of incense rising from a brazier of coals upon which an old man dropped one by one tiny

pastilles brought from the far-off land of Ind. I think I have quoted the story teller's very words."

"Very likely. You have a good memory, and the powerful narcotic drugs come from tropical countries. When I was reading about them, I leaned back in my chair, closed my eyes, and tried to realize how my own senses would be effected by a magician's spells."

Dick Fielding was not given to such dreaming. There was little in his life to stimulate his imagination, or tempt him to idle revery. It was only when some new truth dawned upon him, moving both heart and mind, that he indulged in this fascinating recreation. From his aunt he had no secrets except such as related to his immediate family; and now, as they compared notes, each spoke frankly of moods and modes of thought.

Then, coming back to the subjects in which they were mutually interested, they talked of other plants belonging to the order so distinguished for its narcotic properties; and, among the different species, tobacco received its full share of attention.

Formerly used by the Caribbeans as a sedative, it is but little more than three centuries since it was known in Europe. The famous Catharine De Medicis gave it the sanction of her royal favor; and but for Nicot, to whom she was indebted for her knowledge of this American weed, her name might have won a still more unenviable distinction than it now has.

During the latter half of the sixteenth century, the sovereigns of Europe, of Turkey, and Persia, endeavored by measures of more or less severity to stem its increasing popularity; and, failing in this, they resolved to profit by its consumption. Steadily gain-

ing ground as the years have passed, this one article, which must be counted either a pest or a luxury, is the source of an enormous revenue in every civilized country.

“I wish I was the owner of every tobacco seed and plant in the world,” said Miss Austen, after listening to her nephew’s recapitulation of what he had learned concerning the noxious weed.

“Then you could dispose of your possessions for their weight in gold. You would be the richest woman the world has ever seen.”

“My riches would be consumed. I would sacrifice all for the privilege of ridding the earth of the greatest foe to cleanliness, sobriety, and thrift. Never mandragora, or any other medicinal poison, wrought such ruin as has tobacco. Sir Walter Raleigh was a knightly gentleman, but he sullied his shield when he engraved upon it the broad

leaves of the tobacco-plant. It was no honor to introduce the fashion of smoking."

"Surely not in your estimation, Aunt Margie. You would hardly have trodden upon his cloak to save your daintiest slippers from the mud. But there is the potato, ranked in the same order with your pet aversion; a native of South America, doing its best to make amends for the faults of its relatives. The tomato, too, counts on the side of usefulness. Cayenne pepper and cap-sicum must offset against the deadly nightshades. And these should not all be called deadly. Some of them lose their poisonous qualities after being boiled, and are then used for greens. Our beautiful petunias belong to the order Solaneæ."

"And so I suppose we must tolerate the family relations, although nightshades seem to me intolerable. I always associate them with noisome places. When I was a

child, there was a stagnant pool of water down by the woods, and all around it there was a luxuriant growth of plants which my instincts warned me to avoid. Some grew in the water, lifting their heads above the slime, and these seemed to me most offensive of all. A skilled botanist would have found there much to admire and study."

"Yes, Aunt Margie, such a pool always contains several varieties of algæ."

"I know it does. But father called it a sink-hole, and at last he had it filled. The beauty which another might have seen there was hidden from us."

"That reminds me that Mason has had his curiosity roused in regard to water-flannel. He came across the back meadow just before you came home, and found large patches covering the ground. An old man told him the name of it, and now he wants to know all about it. He appealed to me, and of

course reproved me for my ignorance; so that I tried to find out what I could about it. I suppose I have always seen it, but Mason was the first person who ever called my attention to it."

"I never thought of it in my life," replied Miss Austen. "We ought to be thankful to that boy for asking questions."

"I *am* thankful, and when he gives me a word of praise I feel quite proud."

"You may be sure that he considers it deserved. He is no flatterer. But please tell me what you know of this water-flannel. How is it produced?"

"It is really a species of fresh water algæ, and during some winters it multiplies enormously. You find it where a field or meadow has been under water. In the spring, when the water drains off, this is left, and dries and whitens. Of course, when I tell Mason so much as this, he will ask me

for a general and particular description of algæ in all its varieties.”

“I am tempted to do the same thing, Dick. I have heard of the bank of seaweed floating in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. Columbus crossed it in 1492; and it is still there, an immense growth of *sargassum natans*. It bears floating bladders, and I suppose that is what sustains it upon the surface of the water.”

“Probably. But I have no idea of attempting to teach you this branch of botany. If you were to remain at home we would study it up together. I should enjoy that more than I can tell. It is not exactly in my line, but I find that one thing leads to another.”

Thus is it always with the lover of Nature. His mistress walks ever before him, and ever eludes the clasping of his arms. Yet he hears the rustle of her garments, and

catches glimpses of her beauteous face ; so that he is rewarded at every step, although denied the full fruition of his desires.





CHAPTER XVI.

LILIPUTIANS.

HALLOO there, Dick! Found out about that water-flannel yet?" shouted Mason Stuart, as he saw his cousin at work in the grounds belonging to the old family home.

"I have found out something about it," was replied.

"Then let us hear it. Rufe and I went over to the back meadow together, and we couldn't either of us guess what made it. Tell you what, if it wasn't for being an ignoramus, a fellow might as well give up studying first as last. I used to think any-

body needed to go to a different part of the world to see any thing curious and wonderful; but I've found out all we need to do is to open our eyes, and see what there is right round us."

The speaker had gradually approached his cousin while saying this; and when the final conclusion was reached, he waited expectantly. "Come, now, tell me about water-flannel," he added after a short silence.

"I'm in too much of a hurry to stop to talk," answered Dick Fielding without looking up from his work. "I have just so much to do before dark, and have no time to spare. I can tell you one thing about it, and that is all. Water-flannel is a vegetable growth; an accumulation of a kind of fresh-water *alga*, called *confervæ*."

"What in the world is *alga*? That's a word I don't remember. Come, Dick, tell a

fellow what it is any way ; and I should like to know how any kind of vegetable growth can make that flannel stuff."

"There, Mason, I knew how it would be. I knew you would begin asking questions as fast as you could think," said the young man laughing heartily.

"Well, how can I help it, when I want to know any thing? I suppose *alga* is a new-fashioned botanical name."

"Not new-fashioned, although perhaps new to you. Aunt Margaret and I have been trying to learn what we can about the order of plants known as *algæ*, and sometime we will give you the benefit of our study."

"Well, I suppose I must wait if you say so. But do find time to tell me before long. I promised Rufus I'd let him know. He's getting waked up about such things same as the rest of us. I'll go in and see Aunt Marga-

ret, and see what she says. It's too bad for her to go off again when we're beginning to appreciate her more than we ever did before. Any way, I do, and I always thought enough of her."

Now, seeing the lady thus praised standing by an open window, he bounded forward, and was soon beside her. She addressed him upon a subject entirely foreign to that which had been the theme of his recent conversation; but, true to his nature, he returned to it again, and was again disappointed in not receiving the information he desired.

Not long after, however, when the cousins were together for an evening, he pronounced the mysterious word which had so fixed his attention, adding, "Now do let us hear something about the plants that never blossom nor bear fruit."

"Are you sure that *algæ* never blossom nor bear fruit?" asked Dick in reply.

“I’m not sure any thing about them, any way ; and it has kept me awake sometimes, thinking and wondering. I came pretty near missing my Latin lesson one day because I got that word so mixed up with others. Clarke don’t know any more about the queer things than I do, unless he’s found out lately. Madge don’t either. I’ve seen plenty of seaweed, and I suppose that belongs to the *algæ*.”

“Yes, it does ; and there are a great many varieties of seaweed, as you call it.”

“I know there are ; some large ones and some small ones. I read of one that grows more than a thousand feet long. I thought that was a pretty big thing ; but I’ve learned better than to dispute big stories I don’t know any thing about.”

“I am glad if you have,” responded Clarke.

“So am I. Now I never shall think I am

too wise to learn. I never thought of the ocean being a garden. I knew it was a great aquarium. I saw some illustrations of *algæ* the other day, and some of them looked like trees, and some like great ferns. One had broad leaves that the book said were ten or twelve feet wide. It didn't call them leaves though; it called them fronds."

"So you have learned it all for yourself, Cousin Mason," remarked Nellie Fielding.

"No, indeed, I haven't. I've only learned two or three things; and I shouldn't have done that, if anybody would have told me. I got tired of waiting, so I hunted up what I could. Now somebody else must talk."

Clarke Stuart had been sharply questioned some days before this, when he professed himself wholly indifferent to such vegetation as seemed to him neither useful nor ornamental. Yet, despite his indifference, he had given it some attention. He had

learned that *algæ* may grow in water, or upon the damp ground; sometimes with roots firmly clasping a solid body, sometimes descending into the mud or sand, and sometimes floating loosely.

From discussions, questions with their replies, and odd bits of information which each one of the company had in some way acquired, a tolerably correct idea of this rather obscure class of organisms was obtained.

Dick could tell of the variety, vulgarly styled "wrack," from the ashes of which iodine and soda are obtained. Some species are used as food for cattle. Several, if not most species, are surrounded by a mucilaginous layer. Of these, the carrageen moss furnishes food for the poor people living on the shores of northern seas. Nicely prepared, this moss, or others not unlike it, forms the basis of jellies and blancmanges

which are counted as luxuries by the most affluent.

In Brittany, thousands of cart-loads of seaweed are carried by the peasants twelve or fifteen miles inland, to be spread upon the ground as a fertilizer, for which it is very valuable. The stipes, or stems, of some varieties, become so hard when dry, that they can be manufactured into knife-handles, and also into surgical instruments.

Algæ flourish in different climates, and under widely different circumstances. Some are found in polar regions, and some in medicinal springs; one variety growing in mineral waters whose temperature is above one hundred degrees Fahrenheit. The famous red snow of the arctic regions and of the Alps owes its existence to a minute growth of *algæ*; and the same variety is said to be found upon stones in fresh-water streams.

A microscopic plant described by Montaigne covered the Red Sea at one time, over a surface of two hundred miles, with its little filaments of brick color; and it is said that the ocean is sometimes colored by the same plant. *Algæ* are usually of a deep color, and so conspicuous wherever they are found in any considerable quantity.

While many are mucilaginous, some appear to secrete a liquid so acrid as to decompose the hardest limestone. One, so small as to be seen only under the microscope, growing upon the pebbles of Lake Neufchatel, corrodes these pebbles, furrowing them with worm-like lines of considerable depth.

“Now, Aunt Margie, is that a positive fact?” asked Mason eagerly, when the last statement had been made.

“There is good authority for it,” was replied. “I know that at first thought it

seems almost incredible; but there are powerful vegetable acids, and this *algæ*, small as it is, abounds in such quantities that it can produce large results. You know that many hands make light work; and an army of Liliputians working at their own level will accomplish far more than one who is a giant in size and strength."

"Now, isn't that a splendid comparison?" exclaimed Nellie. "There are hosts of armies of Liliputians in this world."

"Yes, Nellie, and they are always at their posts. Some are throwing up embankments and fortifications, while others are sapping and mining in true soldier style."

"Well, Clarke, that's pretty good for you. I didn't expect it of you, but you do sometimes say just the right thing. Now tell us which is which."

"Must I keep to the vegetable kingdom?"

“No matter about it. Aunt Margaret knows we’re not like a society of old folks, bound to keep straight along on one track. We can assort and label our knowledge after we get through. I shall. I’ve begun taking notes on my own account, and it does me more good than to trust Madge, though she can make a good deal better notes than I can.”

“I’ve got a book too,” said Mary Fielding, who seldom allowed her voice to be heard when matters of importance were under consideration, and who now blushed at her unwonted boldness.

“I am glad to hear that. I wish I had commenced at your age to take notes of what I saw and heard which interested me particularly,” said Miss Austen, thus reassuring her niece.

“Don’t you remember it all, Aunt Margie?”

“Oh, no, indeed! I have forgotten a great deal. That is an actual loss. Then, while writing out what I had learned, other subjects of interest would have suggested themselves to me; so that I should have been always on the alert. I presume I have wasted time on trivial matters, that I should have spent in study, if I had kept such a book as Mary’s. Now, to return to the question before us. The floor is yours, Clarke.”

With a graceful acknowledgment of the favor thus accorded, the young man turned to his brother, and asked, “What is the question?”

“Who or what are building embankments and fortifications? Perhaps you thought I had forgotten.”

“I never knew you to forget a question you had once asked, so I had no reason to expect it now. I suppose you know something of the coral builders.”

“ I know that coral is made by some kind of an animal. It isn't very long, though, since I found that out. I called it a queer kind of stone, and thought no more about it.”

“ It is a queer kind of stone, and the makers of it are queerer still. Prof. Dana says coral is made by four different organisms. They build enormous stone heaps in the ocean.”

“ How do they do it ? ”

“ They secrete it.”

“ What does that mean, I should like to know ? ”

“ How are your bones made ? ”

“ They grow. I eat food that makes bone and muscle.”

“ The polyps take nourishment that makes coral. Some of it they draw from the water, but the most substantial part of their living is furnished by the tiny mollusks that go

drifting along all ready to be appropriated. They thrive, too, upon this diet ; and multiply so rapidly that where one builder is established there are soon hundreds of thousands. As fast as a piece of work is completed, they move up until they come to the surface of the water, where they die from exposure. Then there is the commencement of an island or reef ; and additions are made to it by the descendants of those who did the first work on it."

"That is keeping the business right along in the family ; but I don't quite understand how it is done."

"We can never quite understand the processes of nature," said Miss Austen. "There is always a mystery we cannot fathom. The polyps have been at work for ages, and have contributed largely to the solid substance of the earth. But I'll not interrupt you further, Clarke."

“You never interrupt me, Aunt Margaret. I have no doubt you can describe coral-making better than I can. Many islands in the Pacific Ocean owe their origin to these Liliputians of the sea. They branch out in every direction ; and those nearest the base secrete a layer of carbonate of lime when they are dying, and at last harden into stone themselves. This protects their work from the action of the waves ; and then different kinds of shell-fish and coral adhere to it, so increasing the size of the structure. It gets to be as solid as limestone.”

“It is limestone, isn't it ? ”

“From ninety-five to ninety-eight per cent of it is limestone. Coral islands and coral reefs are beds of solid limestone formed of corals and shells.”

“But how do trees grow on bare limestone ? ”

“They don't grow on bare stone of any

kind. There must be soil before there can be well organized plants. But here is a material for soil. The hardest stone is gradually decomposing under the action of the atmosphere."

"It would take a good while to decompose enough to grow cocoanut trees, and all the other things people need to live on."

"It would. You are right there, Mason; and, to tell the truth, that is a part of the subject I haven't thought much about. Come, Dick, can't you give us some help in the case?"

"Soil must be formed by decomposition or aggregation. Pieces of coral might be broken from the sides of the island or reef, and thrown upon the surface, where at high tide they would be ground together until they would leave something like soil in some crevice of the rock. Lichens would grow upon these bare stones, and help to

make soil, until, after a lapse of years, a chance seed might find enough to support life, and nourish it into a vigorous plant. A bird, the wind, or the waves might bring the seed; and, vegetation once started, it would perpetuate itself. Does that seem to you a probable solution of the difficulty, Clarke?"

"Yes, it does; and, if I'm not mistaken, that is the way the soil of our globe generally has been formed. Some stones crumble very easily, and very few are entirely naked of vegetation. The lichens are always at their work too."

"To come back to seaweeds: there are some varieties, called *nullipores*, which form incrustations upon corals. They are hard and stony, but they are real plants after all. Some are delicate, secreting only a little lime, and these are called corallines. They sometimes grow so abundantly, that when

they are broken up, and accumulated along the shore, they make deposits of considerable thickness. There are such beds in the Florida seas. Now, Mason, I think you will be ready to acknowledge that the Liliputians do their part of work in the world."

"Of course I am willing to acknowledge it," was the boy's prompt reply to his brother's remark. "I am always willing to acknowledge any thing that is fairly proved; but what I don't like is to hear people making grand sounding statements that have no foundation. It's encouraging to you and me to know that small people can accomplish something in the world. That's our only hope of usefulness; and we better take pattern by the coral builders, and reach up, instead of down."

"That is well said," rejoined Miss Austen. "We need to be continually reaching up. We should place our ideal high. He who

aims at the stars will at least get so near them as to see their beauty. These Liliputian builders never tire or grow weary. When they have constructed an island, they often set to work to fortify it by a reef a short distance from the shore, leaving an unbridged moat not unlike that which surrounded an old castle in feudal times. There was a drawbridge across the moat of a castle, but sometimes this was destroyed as a means of safety."

"I've read about such castles," said Madge, with sparkling eyes.

"Yes ; and, if you did not wish to see one, your thoughts were not like mine. Perhaps, if we could examine the outlines of a coral island from base to summit, we should find many points of resemblance between it and some massive building with turrets and embrasures. As it is, only the turrets or the broad flat roof are visible, but you may be

sure of the firm foundation. The process of building is still going on. Here and there a rock appears just at the surface of the water ; and this is gradually enlarged, until at last it has a name and place."

Perhaps in a vague way, each one present had known something of these facts ; yet, as they were now presented, they had all the charm of novelty.

"Please tell us some more," at length said Lilla when she feared that other subjects of less importance would engross attention.

"Aunt Margaret can tell you about diatomeæ, or brittleworts," responded Dick. "We have been talking a good deal about them, and she can give you a very good idea of their growth and uses."

"I could if my knowledge of these microscopic plants was equal to my interest in them. Some naturalists class them among animals, but I think the majority count them

in the vegetable kingdom. They grow nearly everywhere where there is water or moisture. Some are parasitic, some form flakes on stones, some form gelatinous masses, and some live in pure spring water, while some cover the damp ground with a sticky layer. In fountains they stain the walls brown."

"And do you have to look with a microscope to see them?"

"Yes, if you wish to see them to any advantage, so you can understand their structure. Their common name tells you that they are brittle. They contain large quantities of silex; and, as layer after layer accumulates in some favored position, they form beds of considerable thickness. Ehrenberg discovered that the rotten stone used so extensively in the arts is composed of fossilized brittleworts. The fronds are jointed, and the joints, or frustules as they

are called, are something like minute shells.

“ These *algæ* are said to furnish a large part of the food of the lower mollusks. In a curious way, too, they furnish food for human beings. The powder known to geologists as ‘mineral flour,’ and to common people as ‘mountain meal,’ is really the powdered frustules of brittleworts. In some places in Sweden, the poorer people mix it with ordinary flour, and it is said to make quite palatable bread.”

“ Well, that is the strangest thing I’ve heard this evening ; and it puzzles me to know how you found out so much about such out of the way things,” exclaimed Madge.

“ So it puzzles me too,” chimed in Hester.

“ *Algæ* are not out of the way things,” was replied. “ The next time you take a pebble from the brook, and it feels slimy in

your hand, you may know that you have found a plantation of minute *algæ*. On the surface of stagnant water you will see another variety."

"Now, Aunt Margaret, did you learn that all yourself by looking?"

"No, I did not. I am ashamed to say it, but I have almost entirely overlooked this order of plants; and it is only since I came home that my attention has been particularly called to them. Mason wished to know about water-flannel, and applied to Dick for information. So you see this evening's talk is the result of a question asked with no thought of provoking so much curiosity."

"And if I hadn't twisted my ankle, and hurt it, I shouldn't have noticed the flannel. I had to stop, and the sun was shining just right to show it off. I've been across that meadow lots of times, but I never saw any

thing wonderful there before. Will it stay there all summer?"

"You can find that out by looking," answered Clarke.

"And it's likely to me you don't know more about it than I do. Does anybody here know?"

Not one could reply in the affirmative, but several made a note of the inquiry; and there was a prospect that the back meadow would be frequently visited during the coming season.

"Have you told us all you know about *diatomeæ*, Aunt Margaret? I don't like that Latin name so well as I do the other, but I wanted to find out if I could speak it."

"And you are sure that you can. I believe I have told you all I can about *diatomeæ*, but it is not by any means all there is to be known. I hope to learn a

great deal more ; and, now that natural science is receiving such general attention, you will find in almost every paper and magazine some scientific fact worthy of being remembered. If people would only study these facts, instead of the details of vice and crime, there would be infinitely less of evil in the world. A boy or girl better sit down with a magnifying-glass by some pool of water, and study the animal and vegetable life found there, than to read how a safe was opened or a store was robbed.”

“That’s miserable reading, Aunt Margaret, and I don’t read such things. The next time I see a green scum on the water, or a sticky place on the ground, I shall remember what you’ve said, and I shall know what it means.”

“I presume you will, and some time we will compare notes to see how much more we have learned.”

“But, Aunt Margie, if britttleworts are so small, how can they ever make great banks of rotten stone? Who knows certain about it?”

“Men who have made a specialty of such studies, and who are qualified to judge. These beds are the fossilized shells of brittleworts, so they may have been accumulating for ages. A Frenchman has shown, that, by calcining living species, an artificial rotten stone can be produced; so that there seems no reason to doubt the origin of tripoli.”

“How long it takes to bring things round to their right place. First these little bits of plants must grow, so many you can’t count them; and then they must die, and be heaped up, layer after layer, till they turn to stone that people need to use. I suppose that is the end of it.”

“You are not sure of that. It may be these beds of stone will decompose and fur-

nish nourishment to trees of a gigantic growth."

Who can tell?

Only He who formed the earth, and gave to each life its bounds that it cannot pass.





CHAPTER XVII.

THE NEW TEACHER.

EDWARD STUART had been to the railroad station for Miss Greenleaf, and returned without her, greatly to the disappointment of all concerned. Miss Austen had arranged for her coming some days before the opening of her school, and, although not there to receive her, had taken care that nothing should be wanting to insure her comfort.

“I’m afraid she won’t come at all now,” said Jessie Elliot when told that her friend had not arrived.

But the next day, when Mr. Bumstead

went to the station with the lumber-wagon, he saw a lady just stepping from the cars, and heard her ask if there was any conveyance to Austenville.

“There’s no proper one for a lady, but if you’ll wait an hour we’ll have the buggy here,” he answered, although the question was not addressed to him.

“Mr. Bumstead belongs in Austenville,” said the station-master by way of explanation.

“Yes, that I do ; and I’m thinking you’re the one Mr. Stuart came over for yesterday. You’ve come to teach the school, haven’t you ? ”

“Yes, sir, and I intended to be here yesterday. I am sorry I have made unnecessary trouble, but I could not avoid it.”

“You’ve made no trouble, miss. We don’t mind little things. I’ll take your baggage along as soon as I’ve loaded up, and

it'll not be long before you'll be sent for. I'll promise you a welcome if the mistress be away."

During the next few minutes, Miss Greenleaf watched the rapid loading of the wagon ; and, when this seemed nearly accomplished, she went out of the room where she had been sitting, and asked if she could not ride with her baggage.

"Sure, miss, there's a place for you on the seat, and it's not by any means a bad one. The mistress herself has rode on it, but it's not the way she'd choose for you. You'll be pleasing yourself though, and I'd be proud of your company."

"I shall be glad to ride with you," was the simple reply ; and thus Miss Greenleaf won the hearty good will of a man who was never known to turn his back upon a friend.

Before they had reached their destination, he was ready to indorse every word of praise

which might be spoken in her behalf. Her plain face seemed to him really handsome. He noted the weary look it wore, and pitied her as he would have pitied a child. Her board had been engaged in the house in which Mrs. Brady had rooms, and here Mr. Bumstead left her.

Norah Borine looked out in astonishment to see the teacher "riding with wool sacks and barrels;" for despite Jessie's representations she had expected to see a grand lady.

"I think I'll love her," she murmured half aloud. "She's no finer dressed than mother of a Sunday; and she said 'Thank you,' as sweet as the birds sing."

Later, Jessie Elliot was sitting close beside Miss Greenleaf, talking almost gleefully of the changes in her own fortune.

"I think this is the very best place in the world," she said at length. "Everybody's good here. I guess they can't help it, be-

cause, you see, that's the way with Miss Austen and Mr. Stuart. Father's just as good as he can be too ; and I almost believe he's a Christian. I heard him pray last night, when he thought I was asleep. Oh, it's all so different from what it was when I lived with Mrs. Cofran ! I had to work most all the time there."

"But Mrs. Cofran did not intend to be unkind to you. She has a great interest in you, and will be very glad to know that you are so happy."

"She's good to think of me ; and she never was bad, only there was so much work to do, and there wa'n't anybody to love me. How I used to wish my mother was alive, and we had a little cottage like yours ! Now your mother is dead."

"Yes, Jessie ; and I am left all alone."

"O Miss Greenleaf, I'm so sorry for you ! But, when my mother died, I was so small I

couldn't take care of myself; and father wasn't as he is now."

"I know it, Jessie. It was harder for you to lose your mother than for me to lose mine. Now we will help each other."

"I don't think I know how to help you, only about finding flowers, and such things. But I'm so glad to have you here! and I wish your little house was set right down over by the woods. There's a place there looks some like your field. There's a grape-vine running over a rock; and there'll be lots of flowers there in summer."

Already the stranger was beginning to feel herself at home. The wood-fire which blazed and crackled on the hearth gave to her room a cheerful aspect; while the sunny south windows, with an outlook upon a long range of hills, beyond which the far off mountains towered grandly, reminded her of the windows through which she had gazed upon other scenes.

Mr. Gatchell said that every man who came to Austenville felt at once that he had come to the right place to be somebody; and never was this feeling stronger in any breast than in that of "the new teacher." There was work to be done here, — good, honest work for head and heart and hands. There were common interests and common sympathies.

It was yet early spring. Even now the snow lingered in shady ravines and deep gorges. But around the homes of the people the atmosphere seemed pervaded with the gladness of summer.

From Jessie, Alice Greenleaf had heard of the "Sunday evening meetings," and the society for mutual improvement. In coming here, she had been timid and self-distrustful, shrinking from her position. Now, reassured by what she saw and what was told her, she no longer doubted that Providence had directed her steps.

In the evening Mr. Elliot called upon her, as she had expected ; but he was by no means such a man as she had expected to see. Gentlemanly in looks, and prepossessing in manners, she found it impossible to realize that he had ever been a besotted drunkard, breaking the heart of his wife, and leaving his child to the cold charities of the world. She had seen him on a few occasions, meanly dressed, and bearing unmistakable signs of his degradation. Once she had found him by the roadside in a state of insensibility from which she turned with disgust.

Now he met her as an equal, talking intelligently of the duties which were to devolve upon her, and promising to aid her so far as was in his power. Only one allusion was made to his past life, and that was in reference to his daughter.

“She remembers you gratefully, as a friend

when she most needed friends; and I hope we may have the opportunity to repay you in some measure for your kindness," he said courteously.

"I gave no more than I received," was this friend's reply. "Jessie is a child of remarkable tastes and abilities, and she was a great comfort to my mother and myself. Mother used to wish we were able to give her a home with us."

"And you must have despised her father for his neglect of her. I despise myself for it. If it is possible to make amends for such wrong, I shall certainly do so."

What might have been said in response to this, I cannot tell. Mrs. Bumstead and Edward Stuart came in, the former apologizing for so doing by referring to her companion.

"I was sure you would be glad to see her," said the young man smilingly.

"I am *very* glad to see her," was replied.

“Maybe you are, and the mistress gone! If she was here, I’d staid in my kitchen, though we’d all been counting the days for you. There’s so many children needing the right schooling, and we’re expecting great things of you.”

“How ever I could talk that way to a lady I never set eyes on before, I don’t know,” said the good woman afterwards to her husband, when describing this interview. “The words came jumping out of my mouth just as though she called them. I’m that ashamed, and I’m thinking Mr. Stuart was ashamed for me.”

On the contrary, he was pleased with her frank, hearty words; and he had reason to believe that they were fully appreciated by another. Alice Greenleaf did not doubt their sincerity. When left alone, she recalled again and again the homely speech which had sent such a thrill to her heart.

The next morning the early bell roused her from her slumbers, and, looking forth, she soon saw signs of active life. Doors were opened, blinds thrown back, and curtains rolled, while wreaths of smoke ascended from a score of chimneys. She was ready for breakfast long before her landlady called her, and spent the intervening time in arranging some small rustic pictures she had brought with her. She could find other lichens and mosses as brightly tinted, and make other pictures perhaps more beautiful; but these were associated with home and mother, and therefore doubly dear.

She could not be idle. To one trained to her habits of industry, idleness would be positive unhappiness. This, Mrs. Wilder learned during the morning, and, glad to find one who understood the mysteries of dress-making, availed herself of proffered assistance.

“Now, you’re the very one that’s wanted here,” she said heartily. “We’ve got most every thing but a dressmaker, and Miss Austen’s said a good many times we ought to have somebody to do all kinds of sewing. She’s been hoping there’d somebody come along, but there don’t seem to. School don’t keep all the time, and may be you’d be willing to do a piece of work once in a while; though if you was like the teacher we had last summer you wouldn’t half keep school.”

“I have always done more than teach school, and I shall be glad to do what I can here,” was the reply. “There must be a woman somewhere who would be glad to find such a place as this. I know of one myself.”

“Then you might tell Miss Austen, and have her sent for. She’d do it, and the woman never’d be sorry. Nobody’s sorry for coming here. Taint much more’n six

months since the first blow was struck towards starting up the mill again ; and now you'd hardly think 'twas ever stopped by the way things go on. I never see nothing like it in all my life. There'll be gardens here this summer that'll make folks' eyes shine, and they say they're going to have a library of books for the mill folks.

“ We've got two of the smartest boys here there is anywhere, and two of the smartest girls too. You know about Jessie Elliot. Well, there's Norah Borine that lives in the other part of the house, that can match her. She's a gypsy looking child, but she's got a long head. She's out every day in the woods, when she gets her work done after dinner, and there's no end to the things she brings home. Where she finds them I don't know. Jessie went with her the first time, but now she'd as soon go alone as any way.”

In all this Miss Greenleaf was interested ;

particularly in regard to Norah, of whom she was thinking when she caught a glimpse of a child hastening down the street.

“That’s her,” exclaimed Mrs. Wilder. “Now you can see her for yourself. She’ll be back before many minutes.”

As she carried a heavily laden basket, she walked slowly, thus giving time for a study of her face. Her black hair was confined by a band of scarlet flannel, the ends of which had been ravelled to form a deep fringe. Around her neck was a tie of the same material, fastened loosely, with the fringes streaming over her shoulders.

Miss Greenleaf was not disposed to criticise the description of her face; yet she saw deeper than her landlady had seen, and knew that with the clear olive complexion and coal black eyes there was a passionate nature of wondrous strength for good or ill. Her sympathies were at once enlisted, and

she questioned how she could best gain the confidence of one evidently so shy and suspicious.

“If you can make friends with Norah, you’ll do well,” continued Mrs. Wilder, after a short conversation in regard to the work spread before them. “She’s a Catholic, same’s her mother and grandmother, and to my mind that aint no better than being a heathen. She’s smart though, and maybe you’re the very one to bring her round. I shouldn’t think strange if you was. Some way, just the folks that’s needed seem to come here.”

The stranger of whom so much was expected was sitting alone in her room, sewing diligently, when the clock struck three; and at the same time Norah Borine left the house with an empty basket swinging from her arm. Now was the desired opportunity. Another, donning hat and shawl, went out.

basket in hand, taking the same direction as the young girl, who was her unwitting guide. When the latter reached the woods, she turned and looked around; a warm color flushing her cheeks as she observed Miss Greenleaf.

“Please, can you tell me where I can find some flowers?”

Sweet to her as the song of a bird was the tone in which this question was asked; and before her usual perversity had asserted itself she answered cordially, —

“I know where there are some little flowers.”

“Little flowers are just what I want. Did you bring your basket for flowers?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“Then will you let me go with you? I know where to look for flowers at home, but I am a stranger here. If you will let me go with you, I shall be very glad.”

“ You’re the new teacher, aint you ? ”

“ Yes, and I hope you are to be one of my scholars.”

“ I am, ma’am ; and Jessie said I’d be sure to love you. I’m sure of it too.”

“ I was just thinking I should love you. I wish Jessie was here.”

“ There she comes,” was Norah’s joyful exclamation, uttered in response to this remark. “ I waited for her till I thought she wa’n’t coming. — O Jessie, how glad I am ! ”

“ And I am glad too, but I run so fast I can’t be very glad till I get rested. — Why, Miss Greenleaf ! ”

“ You see, I didn’t wait to be introduced to your friend. She came, and I wanted to come too, so I started. I thought she was coming for flowers.”

“ She is always coming for flowers and all sorts of other things. Let’s follow up the brook a good ways this time.”

“If we do I think we shall find some colt’s foot,” said Miss Greenleaf.

“Is that the flower that comes before the leaves do, and then after they’re dead, the leaves come out so large and woolly?”

“Yes, it is.”

“I wish we could find some.”

“We can if there is clay enough in the soil to give it proper nourishment; and I judge that there is.”

“Father was wishing the other day that there was a clay bank near here. He said it would be a great convenience.”

“Perhaps we shall discover it;” and the speaker stirred the water of the little stream, saying as she did so, “There is clay here.”

They walked on, keeping near its bank, and looking closely for tokens of bud and blossom. At length Jessie espied a gleam of golden yellow, and, springing forward, saw

the flower she sought, struggling to raise itself above the pebbles which surrounded it. Solitary, terminal, and many-rayed, with no part of its stalk visible, it seemed to have its root in the very stones themselves.

Norah was wild with delight. The brilliant color charmed her. She gathered the blossoms as eagerly as though they were the rarest exotics; tracing them to their true source, and expressing her wonder in murmured ejaculations. "Isn't it the strangest plant in the world?" she asked.

"Oh, no!" replied Miss Greenleaf. "I have lately read a description of what seemed to me the two strangest plants in the world, and beside these the homely colt's foot is of small account. Shall I tell you about them?"

"Yes, ma'am, please do," answered the young girls in a breath. "Here is a flat stone, where we can sit down; and it will be

so nice to have you talk to us! I told Norah you knew almost every thing about plants and trees," added Jessie, brushing aside some dry leaves.

"I know only a little, my dear; but I am always learning and always interested. My strange plants grow in the torrid zone, where all vegetation is more rank and luxurious than here. One was discovered on the west coast of Africa by Dr. Welwitsch, and in honor of him it is called *welwitschia*. The stem is never more than a foot high, but it is sometimes four feet in diameter. It has only two leaves, and these are what botanists call cotyledons."

"Please, what do you mean by that?"

"Let me ask you a question in reply. Have you ever noticed that the first leaves which spring up from a seed are very different from those which appear afterwards?"

"Oh, yes! I remember that. When a

squash-seed sprouts, it sends up two broad, thick leaves that are almost round ; but the next ones are as different as can be."

" Well, those two broad, thick leaves are the cotyledons ; and the *welwitschia* never gets beyond them, though it is said to live for more than a hundred years. The same leaves last through all that time, too, growing larger and larger, until they are six feet long, and sometimes two or three feet wide. They are green, and tough like leather ; but the wind tears them into strings, and spreads them about on the ground. The flowers grow around the edge of the stem, several of them, rising on short peduncles ; and after the flowers, large cones appear, two inches long, and an inch in diameter. So you see it belongs to the same order as our pines."

" How I wish I could see it ! "

" That was my first thought after reading

a description of this plant. There is one in a glass case in the botanic gardens of England, where trees and plants have been collected from all parts of the world."

"And, please, what about the other one you think so strange?"

"It is a parasite. That means an animal or vegetable which lives upon some other animal or vegetable, instead of getting its nourishment for itself. The *rafflesia arnoldi* grows from the roots of a vine in the island of Sumatra. It is only a flower, without any stem or any leaves, and it expands on the ground nearly three feet in diameter. It is of a pink color, and has the smell of meat, so that it attracts flies. Isn't that more wonderful than the colt's foot?"

"Yes, ma'am; but I like these yellow heads, and I can find them for myself. I don't see how the leaves you told about can last so long."

“That’s because they were made to,” Jessie responded. “You see, every thing is made a certain way, and there aint any mistakes. I suppose those leaves all dry up, and then they’re so tough they last. Leaves don’t need to die every year where there isn’t any winter.”

“Your explanation is the true one,” said Miss Greenleaf. “All created things have their purpose; and He who created them knows how to fit each to its use.”

When they left their resting-place, the mind of Norah Borine had been quickened to new thoughts and questionings. The natural world, with its marvels of beauty and fitness, stretched away before her in an endless vista. Still she was not unmindful of her present surroundings. She gleaned from moss-grown rocks and lichen-covered stumps, plucked an anemone from some sheltered nook, and then bounded away to examine the spotted leaves of the erythrinium.

“I thought I should find a flower this time,” she said in a tone of disappointment. “They would be all in blossom in some places before now. I used to get them in April.”

“Father says the season is very late, but when things once get started they’ll come forward fast. So we must keep our eyes open to see what there is. Here’s a trillium, isn’t it, Miss Greenleaf? — the one that smells so bad, nobody ever wants it, for all it comes so early, and looks so well.”

“Yes, that is a trillium; but I have learned to call it the bath flower. By and by we shall have another trillium, the smiling wake-robin, like this in some respects, and in others as unlike it as a beautiful, loving woman is unlike one who is every way disagreeable.”

“I should think Miss Austen said that,” remarked Jessie. “It sounds just as she

talks; and I think you are both of you smiling wake-robins."

"I don't know what wake-robins are; but I like Miss Austen and Miss Greenleaf," added Norah.

"I knew you would. I knew you couldn't help it," was the gleeful reply of her young friend. "Now please look up through these hemlock trees, Miss Greenleaf. The light comes through them some as it did last spring through the pines, when we went for trailing arbutus. Don't you remember about it? I can shut my eyes and see just how it looked. Oh, it was beautiful!"

Alice Greenleaf had no need to close her eyes, to see again the scene which had so charmed her, when the warm rays of an April sun drew from the pines their sweetest odors. Lichens of delicate green and softest gray clung to the sandy soil; as

though Nature had thrown broadcast her daintiest rugs of rare mosaic work, to conceal the lack of living verdure. Then, close at hand, was the trailing Mayflower, which, since it first received its name from some dear woman who welcomed it as the harbinger of better days after a winter of fearful cold and suffering, has held its place as queen of spring; albeit its lowly mien savors little of royal pomp. Tiny cups, or bells, upturned, snowy white, or tinted as the rose is tinted, often hiding 'neath the rough and homely leaves belonging to itself, it waits to be gathered by some gentle hand. Bending to catch its fragrance ere 'tis severed from the parent stem, few can give it other than a caressing touch.

Alice Greenleaf was an artist, such as God had made her, her heart upspringing to the call of bird and bee, her hand outstretched to grasp each form of beauty, and her soul

responding to the grand undertone of music which pervades the world.

She had never felt so much her kinship to all animate and inanimate objects, as on the day when she stood in the old pine woods, and culled the choicest and fairest from the profusion at her feet.

Berries, glowing scarlet, and by their very abundance seeming quite unlike those she had found by the wayside or on some mossy hillock, — large, luscious, perfect; scattered with a lavish hand, and waiting still for other hands to take the proffered gift.

“ Beautiful ” was a word far too cold and inexpressive, to describe so much of loveliness; yet her young companion could think of none more befitting.





CHAPTER XVIII.

SEEING AND HEARING.

MASON STUART and Rufus Brown had been hard at work; the former assisting his friend in order that they might enjoy an excursion together. As it was a holiday, he wished to improve it to the best advantage.

“If you want to let yourself for the summer, I’ll hire you, and be glad to,” said his friend’s employer. “You’re a good deal smarter than the average. Pity you was born with a silver spoon in your mouth.”

“That silver spoon was taken out of my

mouth long ago," was the quick reply. "I've got to work my own way in the world, but I've not quite made up my mind to be a farmer."

"Farming's a good steady business for boys or men, and to my notion it's as respectable as any."

"Yes, sir; but then you see we don't all like the same kind of business, and it's a good thing for a fellow to make his own choice if he can."

"So 'tis; and if I aint mistaken you can be trusted to choose for yourself. Now, here's Rufus. He's trusty and sensible; but his mother needs his help, and he thinks about what's best for her."

"Yes, sir, but he don't need to forget his mother's boy while he's thinking about her. Perhaps you don't know he keeps up with his class in school, and is as good a scholar as I am."

“I didn’t know it,” replied the farmer, looking at Rufus with an expression of surprise. “I didn’t know he was so bound up in his books. I hope he’ll have a chance at them, and see what he can do with book learning. I should liked to gone to school more when I was young, but there wa’n’t anybody to encourage me : so I settled down, and lately I haint thought much about such things. If my boys had lived they should had a chance at schooling. Perhaps I’ve made as much money as though I’d been a scholar, but it don’t seem to me I’ve took as much comfort. When I hear folks talking about things I don’t know any thing about, I always feel ashamed of my ignorance ; and such a feeling aint pleasant. I’m glad you told me about Rufus. I knew there wa’n’t any better boy round here than he is, but I didn’t know about his being such a good scholar. Going fishing this afternoon ? ”

“ We want to catch some fish, but that isn’t our principal business.”

“ What is it, then, if you don’t mind telling me ? ”

The man was really interested, and, moreover, he was beginning to feel that he had failed in some part of his duty to the poor boy whose filial kindness he had so warmly commended.

“ Well, sir, we can’t exactly tell. We are going to see and hear all we can.”

“ What do you expect to hear ? ”

“ Birds, and squirrels, and bees. The willows and the maples are ready for the bees to feed on. It’s likely, too, we shall hear a good many musical sounds besides.”

“ Shouldn’t think any thing strange if you did. I never went into the woods in my life when I didn’t hear curious noises. Sometimes ’taint any thing more than a leaf falling, and sometimes it’s some little animal

following a path you and I wouldn't know any thing about. Now, what do you expect to see ? ”

“ Oh ! the sky, and water, and trees, and flowers, and stones, and moss, and lichens, and worms, and bugs, and flies, and every thing else there is to be seen. We calculate to keep our eyes open, and we expect there'll be a grand show for us.”

“ That's the way to expect, and that's a good deal better than running after these miserable shows that come travelling round to pick up money that ought to be spent for something else. There's enough in the world to keep you busy, thinking and studying, without hunting up things you've no business with. Which way you going ? ”

“ Rufus thought we'd better go down your lane, and then strike through the woods.”

“ That's a sensible thought in him, and

I've got a favor to ask of you both. Will you grant it?"

"Yes, sir; of course we will," was replied.

"All right. I know I can trust you. Don't take any luncheon with you from home, but stop here on your way. If you aint hungry by the time you've been tramp-ing round three or four hours, you aint much like youngsters in general; and my wife can put up as good a cold bite as anybody else."

"But Aunt Comfort was going to put up a lunch for us," said Mason, a little chagrined that the favor was to be received, instead of given. "She will have it all ready."

"Then let her give it to somebody that needs it. You won't. You're a boy to keep your word, aint you?"

"Yes, sir. We'll do as we promised, and thank you too."

Hardly an hour had passed before the two boys presented themselves in the large kitchen, the very impersonation of youthful strength and eagerness.

“There’s your luncheon all ready for you, and I guess there’s as much as you’ll want for one afternoon,” said the farmer’s wife, in whose face there was something of hardness despite her mild, blue eyes. “You needn’t open the basket till you begin to get hungry. You’re dressed sensible, and that looks well. Father says you’re well mated. I hope you’ll enjoy yourselves.”

“Now, if that wasn’t a limp, I didn’t see straight,” exclaimed Rufus, as they neared the woods. “I told you you ought not to work as you have this forenoon. I was afraid it would make you lame.”

“Well, it hasn’t; and, if it had, what’s the difference? I should have kept moving somewhere. I only twisted my ankle a little,

and I do that every day. I wanted you to come with me, and when I want a thing I'm willing to pay for it. That's the way we have to do, whether we're willing or not."

"I guess it is, Mase; but you do too much for me. How do you expect me to pay for that?"

"Look here, Rufe, what kind of a fellow do you take me for?" was asked sharply.

"The best fellow in the world," was responded without a moment's hesitation. "That's no reason, though, why you should be all the time working for me."

"I'm not all the time working for you, and I'm not the best fellow in the world either. But I just think a good deal of you, and I like to act out my feelings. I never was worth much to make believe not like folks when I do. Aunt Margaret says, if we love anybody, the way to show our love is to do something to make that

person happy. Telling folks you love them don't amount to much, unless you back up your words with your actions."

"Sometimes the words do lots of good. You've got so many to love you, you don't mind about it; but I've only got my mother. I know she loves me, just as well as I do that the sun shines; but it makes me real happy to have her tell me of it."

"I don't wonder it does, Rufe; and, come to think of it, I guess we all like to hear such words once in a while;" and tears stood in the speaker's eyes. "I love you myself, and I hope you won't say another word against my helping you. It does me more good than it does you."

This point settled, they walked on in silence until a flock of blackbirds attracted their attention.

"Look out now for mischief as soon as there's a chance for it," remarked Rufus.

"I'm always glad to see blackbirds in the spring, but they take more corn than I should want to spare if I was a farmer."

"They take other things, too, the farmer is very glad to spare."

"I know it, and perhaps they do more good than hurt; but corn is worth too much to feed crows or crow blackbirds. Perhaps we shall find a crow's nest this afternoon."

"I hope we shall. I've got on the right clothes for climbing, and I can rob a crow's nest with a good conscience. You are interested in getting rid of the thieves this year. You have planted some corn."

"Yes, and I want every kernel I can raise. It wont be much, any way, but every little helps. I'm going to follow your advice, and try to get as much of our living as we can without spending money. I want to catch fish enough for our breakfast tomorrow morning. I shall owe you for them,

but perhaps there'll be a chance to pay you sometime."

"I thought you were through with that sort of talk, Rufe. How do I know but what you'll save my life yet?"

"I'd risk my own to save yours any time, Mase. I'm not the boy I should have been if you hadn't taken me up, and encouraged me to think I could do something, for all mother is so poor. Halloo! there's a crow flying over, still as he can be. That's a sure sign he's got a nest with some eggs or some young crows in it."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Mason.

"What I say. Crows are noisy some seasons of the year; but after their nests are made, till the young ones can take care of themselves, you won't hear much from them. They keep still. I got a nest of young crows last year, and I don't doubt but what

the old ones were where they could see every thing that was going on; but they didn't one of them, young or old, make any more noise than if they'd been dead."

"That's something I never thought of before. I thought all birds made a great outcry when anybody goes near their nests. I don't mean I thought so, for I guess I never thought about it really; but I remember hearing them, and sometimes I've found nests just from their crying and fluttering about so. Crows must be the exception to a general rule.'

"I don't know but they are. Any way, their keeping still almost makes me pity them, same as I do a little child when it feels bad and don't cry. There are the bees you expected to see," said Rufus, interrupting himself in his talk about the evil bird. "The top of that maple stump over there is covered with them. Some-

body chopped down a tree, and made a little pasture for them. The sap fries out, and turns to sugar, and the bees carry it off to make honey. They know where to look for something sweet. See what a lot of them there are. How do you suppose they found the way to this tree? You know more about such things than I do. You've heard more talk about them."

"Perhaps I have; but talk don't always amount to any thing of consequence. It's best to see for ourselves if we can. We can't spend time, though, to watch a great many things, till we find out all we want to know about them. There's been a great deal written about bees; and the amount of the whole of it is, that they were made to do their own work, and instinct teaches them how to do it. They make millions of pounds of honey every year. Tell you what, that makes it seem as though folks

with brains ought to do more than the shiftless ones do, or the smart ones either. It makes me ashamed of myself. There's one thing, though, that looks as if bees worked some like machines. They never make any improvements."

"They don't need to, do they? Didn't they begin right in the first place?"

"Yes, they did. Did you know that the shape of their cells is exactly the one that will give them the greatest number in a given space, and make them the strongest with the least work? That's what the best builders and mathematicians say. They studied ever so long to find it out, but the bees knew it by instinct."

"I didn't know that before, Mase. I'm glad you told me. The next time I see a piece of honeycomb, I shall look at it sharp. Mother says she thinks our garden would be a good place for bees, because they

can come down hill with their loads easier than they come up; and then there's a good deal of white clover about our house. That makes the nicest honey in the world."

"So it does, and I wish you had some bees. You could begin with one hive; and, if you had good luck, you'd soon have as many as you wanted from new swarms."

"Sometimes the swarms go off, and are lost."

"I know they do, but you must look out for that. I guess the bees would like you. Aunt Margaret says they don't like everybody. They don't like cross, dirty, bad-smelling people. You could manage them, Rufe, I know; and I wish there'd a swarm come to you some day. Aunt Comfort knows a good deal about bees. Her father used to keep them, and when he died her mother went and told them he was dead. She said they'd have gone off if somebody hadn't told them."

“Do you believe that?”

“I don’t know ; but Aunt Comfort believes it, and I’m not so sure that strange things aren’t true as I used to be. You’d better get a hive ready, so if a swarm of bees comes along you’ll be ready for it. I think likely there’s an old hollow tree in this very woods where there’s lots of last year’s honey ; and for my part I wish I had some of it. But there, it wont do to stay here all the afternoon. We shall forget what we started for.”

“We have found part of what we started for. Look up. There’s a crow. See where he goes.”

The boys were standing upon an eminence, from which they could watch the glossy black wings until these ceased their flapping above a clump of hemlocks.

“Bet you there’s a nest over there,” exclaimed Rufus. “Let’s find out. We’ve got a long afternoon before us, and I sha’n’t

get away from work again very soon. Come on."

Nothing loth, Mason followed his friend, who strode along rapidly in the direction of the tall evergreens. The distance was considerable, but it was quickly accomplished; and then two pair of eyes were upturned, to discern, if possible, these outlaws of forest and field.

"I aint sure, but seems to me there's something more in the top of this tree than grows there," said Rufus after a prolonged scrutiny. "Any way, I'll find out. There's a small spruce somebody's cut down and left here, that'll make a pretty good ladder. That'll help part way, so I sha'n't have to shin it so far. It's a long stretch to the lower limbs, and I don't care about wasting my strength. If I had a tough vine or a rope, I might try the South Sea Islander's way; but you hold this ladder steady and I shall be all right."

“Don’t fall. Aunt Margaret says we ought to be careful, though she wants boys to climb anywhere that’s necessary without being afraid. I never tried a tree yet, that I didn’t go up as high as I wanted to.”

“We all know that, Mase; but my ankles are both of them strong, and I’m good for this job.”

Using both hands and feet, he passed over the round ladder, and then made his way slowly until he found firm footing. Up, up he went, to find himself fully rewarded for his labor.

“Here they are,” he shouted. “Four young ones, all necks and legs. I’m going to throw them down, and you just put the heel of your boot on their heads. That’ll finish them. There’s another nest in the fourth tree from this one, and the old crows are somewhere round, watching to see what’s going on. Now hear what the young ones have to say about it.”

Not a sound escaped them, as one after another they were thrown to the ground, falling helplessly, as like to the description Rufus had given of them as like could be.

“Put them out of their misery as quick as you can.”

“I’ve finished them,” was the quick response to this injunction. “The small birds ought to thank us. There’s nothing makes me so boiling over mad, as it does to see a crow robbing every nest it can find. They make a clean sweep, and we’ll do the same thing. I suppose ’twould sound better for me to say it makes me angry, but that don’t begin to describe my feelings. When you get down I’ll go up that other tree. I’m going to do half the hard work.”

There was some friendly contention over this, which ended at last when Mason positively refused to yield. There was not a more daring boy in town than he, not one

who could climb more swiftly and surely; and, if his ankle dumbly protested against the service imposed upon it, he made no sign. In announcing his success, he sent to instant destruction four more as ugly looking creatures as were ever classed among birds.

“That’s a good job done,” he said when he reached the ground. “Now I should like to know where the fathers and mothers are.”

“In some of the trees round here, but it’s of no use for you to look for them.”

“Do you suppose they care any thing about it? They’re so cruel, perhaps they don’t care for their own children.”

“Yes, they do. The books say that wild beasts are more ferocious when they have young ones than at any other time; and I suppose the crows feed their young ones on eggs they steal from other birds. I don’t think, though, they are quite as bad as hawks.”

“*I think they are, as far as they can be. They’ll take chickens when they can find them small enough. I hate hawks as bad as you can, and this year I’m looking out for them sharper than I ever did before. I can’t afford to lose any of my chickens. I’ve got forty, and I mean to pick up enough to keep them without costing me much. Then I’ll sell them, and give the money to mother. Look up! There’s a hawk this minute, but it wont do to stop here any longer; and if we did we couldn’t kill the miserable fellow.*”

“After all, I suppose hawks have a right to live, else they wouldn’t be here,” said Mason.

“Then let them live on what they’ve a right to,” was quickly replied. “There are plenty of frogs and lizards and snakes, besides hosts of rats and mice and moles. Nobody’ll quarrel with them for taking such creatures. I saw a hawk mousing in the

back meadow, one day last summer ; and he made good work at it. I've hunted for their nests, but I never found one ; though I guess I could if I had time enough. There is always work waiting for me, and I'm glad I can do it."

"That's the best of it all ; and you can choose, too, what to do. We can choose what kind of men we shall be. What kind of a man do you choose to be, Rufe ?"

"A good one. I should like to be so good I should always do right, and so strong and rich, I could help everybody that needed help."

"That's a good choice ; and I should like the same, only I want to know ever so much besides. Hear that squirrel chattering ; and there's another answering. They're having a concert. That makes me think, that in the last letter Ed wrote to Aunt Margaret, he told her that Robert Bumstead found a

nest of squirrels in the shed chamber, where there was a lot of butternuts. Robert was trying to tame them, so they would eat out of his hand. I should like to find such a nest myself."

"I guess there are enough of them not far off. Squirrels were so plenty last fall, I didn't know as I should get any nuts at all; and, as for our big sweet apples, they were sure to take the ripest and best. But there's another sound. According to your plan, it was a part of our business to listen to every thing we hear."

"Yes, that's it. A woodpecker is making that noise. There's a pair of them getting ready to set up housekeeping; and, instead of putting a roof on their house, they dig their house under a roof. I hope, when they get it ready, they wont be turned out."

"What do you mean by that, Mason?"

"Why, sometimes other birds take a fancy

to the woodpeckers' nests, and drive them out. You see, Madge is always studying about birds, and I learn a good deal by hearing her talk. There's one kind of woodpecker people call the log-cock, because it works away so at old logs and fallen trees. It tears off the bark, and rips out chips at a great rate. One day, down in Maine, a man who was in the woods heard such a noise, he thought there was a bear somewhere near; but, when he got to where the noise came from, he found one of these log-cocks tearing away at an old log."

"What was he doing that for?"

"I suppose he found something to eat. There would be bugs and worms and beetles in such a log, and they are woodpeckers' dainties. There's a tree with the bark drilled full of round holes, smooth as though they'd been cut. Likely a golden-winged or a downy-headed woodpecker did that. If

we had been near here then, we might have heard him whacking away with his bill; and, if we could see quick enough, we should have found out that he had a tongue made expressly to draw out the insects after he got on their track."

"I suppose we should; but they don't make any such noise as a great clumsy bear would. I can't quite believe your Maine story."

"I didn't at first; but that woodpecker isn't like what we have round here. The book said it looked like a black hen; and I suppose it worked so fast it made a great noise."

"That must have been the way. I wish I had a sister to learn about things, and then tell me. It's a great help to a fellow."

"That's a fact; and my sisters stir me up, so I have to keep wide awake, or else they'll get ahead of me. Now, what next?"

"There's an ant's nest in that rotten stump. If you tear it open, and look sharp, you can see some ants' eggs."

"I don't care about it now. I'm thinking about fishing. Ants are worth studying though. They keep cows. Did you know that?"

"No; and I guess *you* don't."

"Yes, I do; and they depend on their cows as much as you do on Clover Top."

"Now, Mase Stuart, if you were anybody else, I should say that was a whopper."

"Well, I'm not anybody else, and that isn't a whopper. Their cows are *aphides*, or plant-lice; and the ants know where to find them."

"But I can't see."

"Of course you can't. When I first heard of it, I didn't believe it; but now I know it's true. The little cows are the same that make honey-dew; and ants like

honey, no matter who makes it. Some time we'll take a magnifying-glass, and pay them a visit at milking time."

The boys walked rapidly as they talked, and soon came to the brook which was here overshadowed by wide-spreading trees, whose interlacing branches, when covered with leaves, allowed scarcely a ray of sunlight to fall upon the water in which they were mirrored. Rufus knew the place well. It was his favorite resort whenever he could command the time to angle for a luxurious repast.

Two strong, flexible rods were in waiting just where he had left them months before. To these, lines were quickly attached, and hooks baited. Then, that they might not interfere with each other, the friends separated; Mason choosing a pool of great depth, by which a stump, whose roots were partly upturned, furnished a comfortable seat he was glad to appropriate. He had sat there

before with no thought of its insecurity.

Nor a word was spoken. Rufus was intent upon his occupation, when a loud splash startled him; and, turning to look for the cause, he saw only the troubled waters and half submerged stump. He uttered one agonized cry, and rushed to the spot. Grasping the stump, as he planted his feet firmly, he replaced it in the bed from which it had been torn, and, at the same instant, caught a glimpse of a wan, white face.

Fortunately, he was an expert diver and swimmer. He had often measured his strength with that of Mason Stuart, coming to the goal at the same moment; and now, when it was life or death for his comrade, he was quick to see what must be done. Shoes and jacket were thrown aside, and he plunged into the pool. He knew there was danger from perilous surroundings, but he

did not think of his own danger. He must save his friend. It seemed an age that he struggled in the water, sustaining a heavy burden, and striving in vain to escape from the treacherous element. Again and again what seemed to him solid ground gave way, mocking his efforts. A terrible, well nigh despairing fear gave him momentary strength, and they were safe. Yet he lay panting, as if his very life would go out, while the face of his friend was like the face of the dead. Limp and motionless was the prostrate form beside him, and the sight roused him to renewed action.

What he did he could never tell; but after a long, long time there was the quivering of lips and eyelids, and the feeble fluttering of a young, brave heart, which inspired him with hope. Then came quick convulsive gasps, which at length gave place to regular breathing, and animation was fully restored.

“What is it?” asked the half conscious boy. “What’s the matter?”

“The matter is that you have been in the water; but you’re all right now,” replied Rufus, compelling himself to speak quietly and cheerfully. “The old stump was too far gone to hold you. Are you hurt?”

“Guess not. Can’t tell. My head feels so I don’t know. Something struck it; but you’re all wet.”

“Of course I am. Couldn’t go into the water, and not get wet. O Mason, I thought I’d lost you!” and tears attested to the deep emotion of the speaker. “This won’t do,” he exclaimed directly. “The business now is to find out how we are going to get home. Do you suppose you can walk a step?”

“I can try,” answered Mason Stuart, and with assistance he succeeded in rising to his feet. “I need warming up, and” —

It was of no use to fight against the weakness which overpowered him. He could not take a single step. He must be left alone while his friend went for help; and, protected by the only dry garment at hand, he lay down upon a heap of leaves to wait the result.

Again Rufus forgot himself in his anxiety for another. Exercise quickened his pulse, and sent the warm blood leaping through his veins. He hastened forward, shouting as he went, "Help, help!"

"Where's help wanted?" came the reply at length.

"By the brook. Help, help! Come! Quick!"

"Ay, ay!"

When this was heard, Rufus sunk down; and he, too, waited until Mr. Furber came near. A few words sufficed to explain the situation; when the farmer said perempto-

rily, "Keep on to the house. I'll look after that boy. Hurry up, and tell Miss Furber about it."

Mason Stuart opened his eyes languidly as his name was pronounced; but he was quite too weak to make any opposition when Mr. Furber lifted him from the ground, and started homeward, carrying him as tenderly as if he were a child.

Meanwhile a bed was made ready for him by the farmer's wife; and, when he reached the house, he found Rufus sitting before a blazing fire in the most comfortable chair the house afforded. He attempted a humorous remark, but the humor exhaled in a long-drawn sigh.

Mrs. Stuart was summoned, and came with Dr. Gray, who carried Mason home, where Aunt Margaret was the first to greet him.

"I'm ever so glad you're here, Margie,"

he murmured. "I should have drowned if it hadn't been for Rufus. He's the best fellow ; but I feel like a baby. Kiss me, please, Margie."





CHAPTER XIX.

A LIFE SAVED.

RUFUS BROWN was not forgotten by the family which owed so much to him. Clarke went at once to his mother's, and expressed their appreciation of his heroism.

“I'm glad he could do it,” was the widow's simple reply. “We've a great deal to be thankful for to you all, and Rufus would give his life to save Mason's any time; though I don't know how I could do without him. I don't think he's hurt; but I wanted him to go to bed, and get a good long rest.”

“He needs a long rest; and please, Mrs.

Brown, don't let him work any more this week. Mason will wish to see him by morning. We owe him a larger debt than we can ever pay."

"Well, I don't know about that," responded the mother with tears standing in her eyes. "'Twas every thing to have Mason's life saved, but it wa'n't much for Rufus to go into the water after him. He said 'twas a bad place, on account of roots and the crumbling bank; and the brook's wider there, and deeper too, the whole width, than anywhere else this side the mill. Tell your mother, Mr. Stuart, that I thank the Lord for sparing her boy to her. There's been a providence in his friendship for Rufus. I've felt that all along; but I didn't know how 'twould end."

The end was not yet, as Mrs. Brown was made aware the next morning, when Miss Margaret Austen came at an early hour to inquire for her son.

“Gone to work!” exclaimed the lady in a tone of surprise. “He ought not to do that. I hardly expected to find him up.”

“He said he was well as ever, and he couldn’t afford to lose any time,” replied Mrs. Brown. “I said a good deal to him to have him rest to-day; but I couldn’t persuade him, and I don’t often tell him what he *must* do. He meant to get through in season to go to Mrs. Stuart’s this evening.”

“Mason will think that a long time to wait.”

“He aint hurt so he’s going to be laid up; is he, Miss Austen?”

“We hope not. But he complains of his head, and seems inclined to keep very quiet. He talks more about Rufus than he does about himself.”

“He’s the best boy I ever saw, and that aint saying any thing against my *own* boy,”

remarked Mrs. Brown with great emphasis. "I'm afraid them that see him all the time at home don't know how to prize him. After Rufus cut his foot, last winter, he used to come here and do chores for me just as though it belonged to him to do them; and, when I said any thing against it, he'd turn me off as polite as could be, and keep right along. That want all he done either. He earned money to bring to me; and there wa'n't a day, unless 'twas Sundays, but what he brought us something to help us along. He's a Christian, if there's one in the world; and the way he's encouraged Rufus has done more good than all the rest. I'm glad my boy could do something for him. I know you've always thought a sight of him, Miss Austen, and you've reason to."

"I was always sure of that, Mrs. Brown. Mason has never disappointed me."

Much more was said; the conversation

being prolonged until the visitor felt obliged to leave, that she might return to her nephew, who was unwilling to have her away from him.

In the evening Rufus Brown presented himself at Mrs. Stuart's.

"O you dear old fellow! I'm thankful to see you," was the greeting he received from Mason. Then two arms were thrown tightly around his neck, and kisses pressed upon his lips. "I've been wanting you all day."

"And I've wanted you," was the reply. "But Mr. Furber's work needed doing. He hasn't let me work much though. He said I might play, and he'd do enough for us both. He sent me after our lunch-basket, though, for one thing. You aint really hurt, are you, Mason?"

"I hope not. My head feels queer when I try to think, but I don't mean to think much. Aunt Margaret's going to let me go

back to Austenville with her; so you see there's something gained any way. And here's something for you too."

Saying this, the speaker gave to his companion a bank-book, in which the sum of two hundred dollars was placed to the credit of Rufus L. Brown. This amount had been deposited that day.

"What does it mean, Mase?" was asked wonderingly.

"It means that mother and Aunt Margaret have, each of them, made you a present, and put it where it will be gaining till you want to use it. They think I am worth as much as that; and if it hadn't been for you they wouldn't have me. That's the whole story; and you needn't be too independent to take it. They can do it just as well as not, and I'll see that they are well paid for it. Now, then, you have a little beforehand;" and the boy made a vain effort to subdue the huskiness of his voice.

Rufus was overwhelmed. His first feelings prompted him to a positive rejection of the gift; but better counsel prevailed, and with a grateful heart he accepted the kindness of his friends, although disclaiming any merit in his conduct. When told of this, his mother raised her hands in dumb surprise, then wept as she had never wept when poverty threatened her sorest. She shrank from dependence, yet she could not but rejoice that some provision was made for her son.

He went to his work each morning, and each evening visited his friend, so that the days passed rapidly, marked by little of incident, until Mason announced the fact that Margie was ready to go back to Austenville.

“And you are going with her,” said Rufus.

“Yes, I am. I feel pretty well, but the

doctor says I ought not to study books at present. Dick thinks so too, and you know he is half a doctor. Splendid fellow he is. I expect he'll make us all proud of him, and I've told him so a good many times. You'd like him if you knew him as well as I do."

"I like him now; but, you see, he is a young man with plenty of money, and I am only a poor boy."

"Well, what of that? Perhaps he'll be a poor man when you're a rich one; and perhaps you'll have a greater name than he will. You can't tell any thing about who is going to get up highest, only it's pretty sure to be the one who keeps climbing right along. You're good for that. I expect you'll go by me in books this summer; but I shall learn some things not put down in books. I wish you could be with me. Aunt Margaret thinks ever so much of you, and so does Ed, though he hasn't written about you

only that once, when I told you. He's too busy doing Aunt Margie's work, and his own too."

"He must be busy ; and there isn't any reason why he should write or think about me."

"Yes there is, Rufe. You saved my life ; and I am something to him, if he is a grown-up man."

Edward Stuart had never realized how much this persistent, aggressive brother was to him until he read of the accident which had so nearly proved fatal. Then his heart gave a sudden bound ; and he knew how interwoven with all his hopes and plans, were the ambitious dreams in which his young brother bore a part.

"Be sure to take Mason with you," he wrote to his aunt ; and the day they were expected he went to the station himself to meet them.

To his eyes Mason had changed much, but he forbore to say this ; and soon he was so engaged in answering questions that he had no opportunity for other talking.

“There is home,” he said at length, as they caught a glimpse of the old stone mill and its surroundings. “Do you think you shall be contented to have it for *your* home the next three months ?”

“Think ? I *know* I shall,” was the quick reply. “I can’t do the subject justice till I get rested. Then you’ll see and hear enough of me. Oh, what a grand place !” he added soon after, as the little village was outspread before them. “I’m glad mother lost that ten thousand dollars ; aren’t you, Ed ?”

“I don’t know that I am prepared to say quite that.”

“Well, I am. It’s just been the making of you, and I think ’twill be of Clarke.

You were a good fellow before ; reliable, and a good scholar, and all that ; but it's something for a man to look round, and think he can help straighten out things that are crooked. That's what you're doing, isn't it ? ”

“ Something of the kind ; and in their way our people are all helping, from Mr. Bumstead to Mrs. Brady.”

“ Who is Mrs. Brady ? ”

“ Our best weaver, and the grandmother of the young girl you can see just in the edge of the woods. That is Norah Borine.”

“ Oh ! I've heard of her. Aunt Margie has told me, and I'm going to get acquainted with her if she *is* shy. I'm used to girls ; and I guess they're all a good deal alike, the same as boys are.”

Nothing escaped this boy's notice. The trees seemed grander, the grass greener, and the flowers brighter, than those he had left behind.

“I’m glad mother lost that ten thousand dollars,” he said once more. “This is almost better than grandfather’s house. Is that woman standing on the piazza Mrs. Bumstead?”

“Yes, and a dear, good woman she is,” replied his aunt. “I am as glad to see her as she is to see me.”

Up the avenue they drove, while cottage doors and windows were thrown wide open, that their inmates might have a better view of the lady whom they regarded with so much esteem. Hardly had she responded to the affectionate greetings of Mrs. Bumstead, and expressed her own pleasure at being again in Austenville, when Mr. Bumstead came hurrying in.

“Sure, now, this is the best day I’ve seen for five weeks,” he exclaimed. “We’ve managed to keep the mill going without you, but I don’t want to try it again very soon.

It seemed as though we ought to give the big wheel a push, every morning, to make certain 'twould turn over as many times as it ought to. We're all so glad to see you back ! I didn't know but 'twas best to ring the bell, so you might understand it."

"I understand it now, and fully reciprocate the gladness," answered Miss Austen, without withdrawing her hands from the strong clasp in which they were held. "You see, I have brought another boy."

"I've been expecting him. There can't be too many of the right kind. I'm thinking we shall find a way to get along with this one ;" and now Mason's hands were imprisoned.

"I'm not a hard boy to get along with, sir," was the quick reply.

"Sure, lad, I think you're not. At the worst, there's room enough here ; and your aunt can manage any boy I ever saw."

“ Yes, sir : she always managed all of us.”

“ And a good thing it was for you.”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ Well, I hope you’ll like Austenville, and get well here. You don’t look over strong ; but you’ve a good frame to build on, and my wife will know just what you need. Shook hands with her yet ?”

“ Yes, sir ; but I haven’t seen Robert.”

“ You’ll see him soon enough. He’ll not be long in coming when he knows the mistress is here.”

The meeting between these boys was undemonstrative, and yet each regarded the other with evident interest. Now that the first excitement of his arrival had subsided, the new-comer was too weary to say more than courtesy required ; and Robert waited for him to take the initiative. When supper had been eaten, his aunt showed him to his room, and left him to rest.

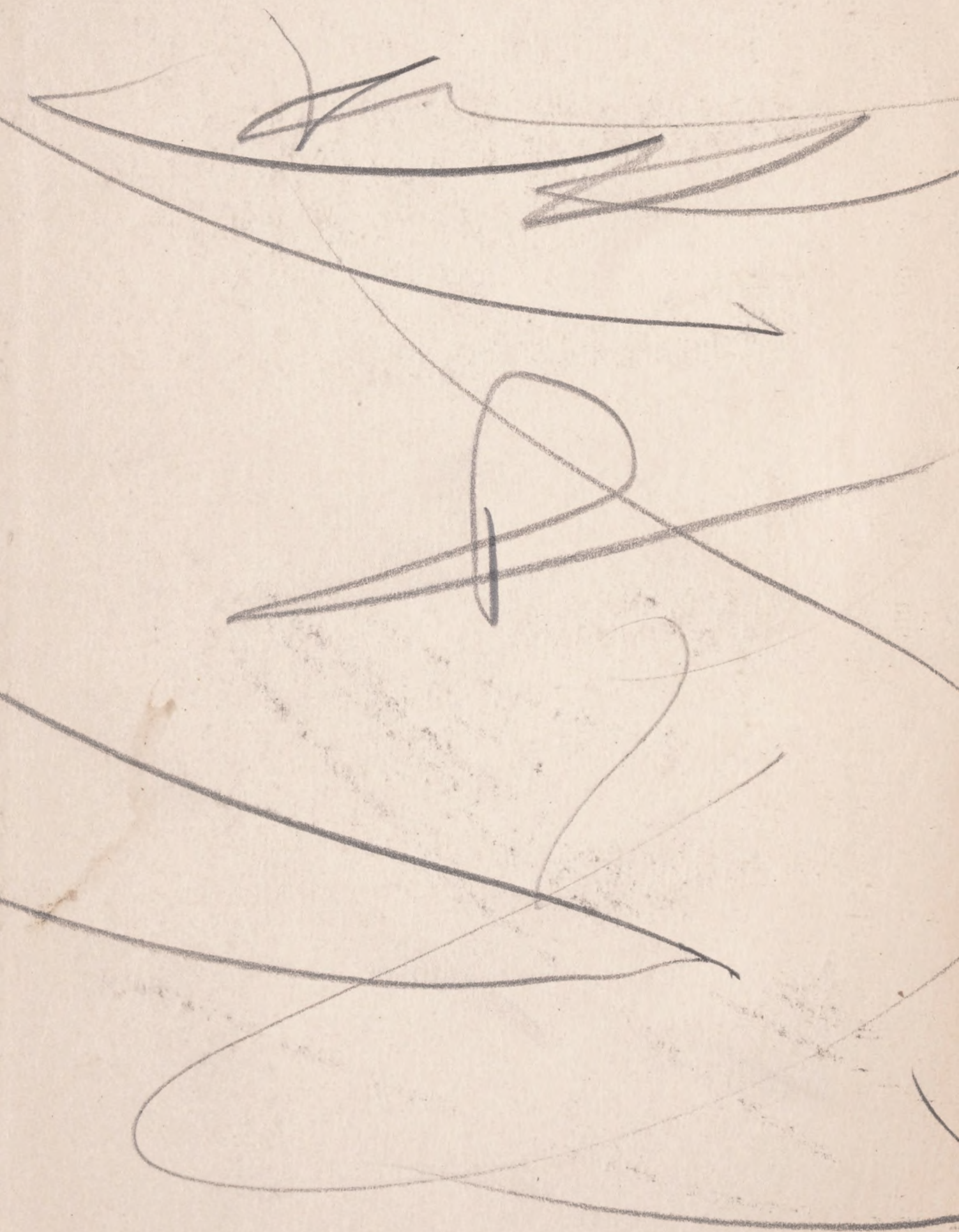
To many it would seem that little had transpired during her absence, — surely little of which she had not been informed by letter ; but events which were counted trivial by others were of great significance to Margaret Austen. When alone with her nephew, it was apparent that the running of the mill and the work which had been accomplished were, for the time, of secondary consideration to her.

She asked how Mr. Elliot appeared in the sabbath evening meetings, and what Harold had said. No one was forgotten in her inquiries ; but, after the meeting, she regarded the school as next in importance.

“ The school is what it should be,” said Edward Stuart emphatically. “ We could not have a better teacher. Miss Greenleaf is a rare woman ; and here is the place for her to develop her own talents, as well as the talents of others. She has made the ac-

quaintance of most of the people in the district ; and, for every acquaintance she has made, she has gained a friend. Jessie and Norah love her with all their hearts, while Harold and Robert would be happy to do her a favor at almost any cost to themselves. If I am not mistaken, she has a great deal of latent power of which she is unconscious. You will help her to discover it, and she will be a wonderful accession to our summer resources."





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